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# OUT OF THE PIT





'AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME'

*Frontispiece*

# OUT OF THE PIT

*A CHALLENGE TO THE COMFORTABLE*

JOHN NEWSOM

*With a Preface by*

HIS GRACE THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

BASIL BLACKWELL · OXFORD

1936

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To  
Sir Wyndham Deedes

I have no doubt that you will be, at any rate in private, this book's most severe critic and I offer it to you conscious that such a dubious honour will not affect your sound judgment. It ends where your ideas on such matters begin, and had I taken your counsel in its construction it would have been a better, or at least a longer, book.

You once told me that my generation seemed to be obsessed with the desire for safety and security and where your oratorical powers have failed, my written word is unlikely to succeed, but their purposes are, I think, identical. Unless and until the Apollyon of poverty and unemployment is challenged in the spirit of Mr. Valiant for Truth rather than of Mr. Faint Heart we shall not enter the Delectable Mountains. All the Trumpets sounded for Mr. Standfast when he went down into the river, they sounded, I am persuaded, with some measure of unanimity. To-day the 'Trumpets flourish up and down but give no sound at all' and I know that you will not rest until the note is sounded at whose behest all men of good will can rally to the construction of an England which will be comparable to the City of God rather than to the City of Destruction.

Durham. August 1936.



## CONTENTS

Preface by His Grace The Lord Archbishop of York	ix
Introduction	xi
Chapter	
I. 'Let not the Pit shut her mouth upon me'	1
II. 'They have digged a pit for my soul'	18
III. 'They shall eat their bread by weight and with care'	27
IV. 'Wherein now is thy condition better than ours?'	36
V. 'I am a Man of Despair, and am shut up in this Iron Cage. I cannot go out'	45
VI. Two Men's Diaries	59
VII. 'They gave their bodies to the Common- wealth and received . . .'	64
VIII. 'The Owner of the Pit shall make it good'	68
IX. 'So he gave him his hand, and he drew him out and set him upon sound ground'	79
X. 'The Unemployed don't want work'	92
XI. 'But a certain Samaritan . . .'	97
XII. Conclusion	103
Appendix I	110
Appendix II	111
Bibliography	118

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

'An Englishman's Home'	<i>Frontispiece</i>
'More Englishmen's Homes'	<i>Facing page</i> 36
'A Land Fit for Heroes'	" " 64
Derelict'	" " 92

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## PREFACE

**T**HIS may not be a good book, in the sense in which its author denies that description of it; but it is a vivid and urgent book. It is a description of a shameful state of things, given from the red heat of experience, and calculated to sear with a hot iron the reader's conscience. It is not fancy but fact. The author knows what he is talking about, and every detail in his picture is verifiable.

How much longer are we going to let this sort of thing go on? The Unemployed of the Distressed Areas are not a potent force as Parliamentary electors. They cannot make an effective demand for remedy of their grievances. And politicians, who are inevitably more swayed by the pressures to which they are subjected than able in unbiassed detachment to select for attention the justest claims, cannot be expected to turn their attention and energies continuously to this problem, unless we who either know the facts or learn them from such writers as Mr. Newsom, supply the needed pressure. Remedy is never impossible where men care enough.

Meanwhile there is the admirable work, also here described, that can be developed if we send more support. And there are the people—so brave in face of their sufferings, so ready to benefit by opportunities provided. I hope everyone will read this book and act on the generous impulse that it must call forth.

WILLIAM EBOR.

*August 3, 1936.*





## INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS is not a good book; its ideas are confused, its appeal obscure, it has been written too quickly and without due regard to clarity of expression. Composed in the intervals of a somewhat exacting occupation, it displays a lack of unity and a regrettable tendency to repetition. Very little of its factual content is novel and doubts may be expressed concerning the author's motive in writing it at all. It was written because it had to be written; living for the last five years almost exclusively among unemployed workers in the South, Midlands and the North and appalled not only by the poverty and the mental distress which such worklessness entails but also by the urgency for action on a scale which at the moment does not seem to be envisaged by public or private conscience, I considered that some good, however small, might be accomplished if once again people were made aware of the nature of the problem.

The solution, whatever it may be, will not be easy, but we shall be judged not alone by our success but by the efforts which we made. I am not advocating the policy of any one political party or particular economic doctrine. I am rather challenging all politicians, industrialists and ordinary people of good will. Whatever the political party, the religious organization, the city, town or village, collectively and individually, it is their responsibility. I am presenting the problem. With what answer will you be satisfied?

Repetition has, however, dulled the significance of even the most alarming statistics and the figures relating to unemployment reported monthly in the press have been no exception to the rule. Quoted in thousands and tens

of thousands they have become abstractions referring not to men and women but to increases and decreases in a total, an arithmetical proposition expressed in graphs and devoid of human content. The total—an entity in itself—is used to bolster up political argument, to indicate the wisdom or folly of a general policy, until its reality is lost in a maze of hypothetical considerations. 'Two million unemployed.' What does such a statement mean to nine out of ten citizens of Great Britain? Two million is too great a number for most of us; like the Trobriand islanders we would rather think of it as 'many many.' 'Unemployed'—we conjure up a picture of a sullen figure in cap and choker brooding sedition and capable of effort only in the avoidance of work.

There is no 'unemployed man.' He is as much an abstraction as his predecessor of a century ago—the 'economic man.' There are in fact a very large number of people whose personal lives are deeply influenced by actual or potential unemployment; but the influence of this upon them and the development of their personalities will be determined by the cause of the disaster, and although certain general conclusions can be drawn, the most important facet of the problem I would have considered is personal and individual. It is a question affecting *men* and *women* with individual needs who react to the fact of unemployment in as many ways as they are different persons.

Moreover it is sometimes tacitly assumed that 'the unemployed' constitute a definable strata of society, the lowest rung in the ladder or, as economists have happily termed them, 'the residual problem.' For better or worse there are divisions or groups in the social system based on differences of wealth and education, blood and occupation, and 'the unemployed' are not a horizontal line in the scale of 'upper ten' to 'submerged tenth' but

rather a vertical line running through all sections. There are unemployed men and women in Bath as well as in Blaina.

It is not the purpose of this book to discuss the economic and political causes of unemployment, temporary or prolonged; a constant flood of books and pamphlets by politicians and economists has descended during the last decade on those who have time and strength to read them. Nor does it purport to describe the incidence of unemployment, numbers, fluctuations, classifications—permanent and temporary and casual; age and sex; industrial and geographical; frequency and duration of spell. This information is already available through the Unemployment Insurance system and the analyses of the Ministry of Labour. With one or two salient exceptions there has been little attempt to describe the effects of unemployment upon the individual and the community, what unemployment has meant in terms of personal and group relationship and within the limits of a restricted geographical area, and from personal experience this book is offered as a contribution to this end.

No man can say what the effects of a shorter or longer period of enforced idleness on personal life may be unless he has himself experienced such a condition, it is presumptuous to speculate, to consider as it were under a microscope a man or woman's most intimate thoughts and feelings, but some have been privileged to live and work in close personal contact with unemployed men and women, and it is on their experience and observations that the conclusions arrived at have been formed.

The effects of unemployment will vary not only with individuals, but according to the period of unemployment, the original occupation and conditions of labour and certain geographical considerations. This book is about the Special Areas—why they are termed 'Special' will be discussed in a later page—firstly because they

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which 20% of the live register of unemployed are dependent on public assistance. Through Newcastle he escapes to the Northumberland Hills, to Otterburn or Berwick and Scotland beyond. If asked what he thought of Durham he would reply that it didn't look very distressed, that the Cathedral was 'wonderful' and that the County Council built good roads. He might comment on the pit heap at Ferryhill and the huts at Birtley and possibly the very curious name of that village just north of Durham City—Pity Me.

One such motorist was offered a further insight into the life of Durham; driving at night through Chester Moor a child emerged suddenly from behind a bus, ran straight into the path of the car and was thrown twenty feet on to the side walk. It was not his fault, and the spectators assured him that it was an accident. He picked up the injured girl and carried her down a side street to her home. There were only two rooms and a scullery, a double bed in one and a single bed in the other. Ten people living in that hovel, husband, wife and eight children, of whom three were mentally deficient. The father earned £2 a week, and two of the children brought in another 15s. between them. He put the child on the bed, and helped the doctor dress her leg. It was a grim scene. The child could only make hoarse animal noises and was unable to say where she was hurt; dumb, and as they said 'wanting.' The room was packed with neighbours all crying and giving advice. The smell of cooking fat fought valiantly with the damp serge of the policeman's uniform, the other children clustered round asking questions and getting in the way. 'I felt sick, sick not only because of the shock of the accident, but sick that human beings should live like this. I never knew before what overcrowding really meant.'

'I never knew'—small comfort for those who would

have a different England. There is a chance, though a faint one, that ignorance prevents the uprising of national will to abolish—not merely modify—the intolerable conditions of poverty. A cockney from Bethnal Green was once asked to address a meeting of Oxford dons to tell them of life in the East End of London. He began his talk, faltered, and looking down on his audience said ‘it is no use, I cannot begin to say what I want to—you are all too ignorant.’

It is held that the English are a generous race, quick to sympathize with suffering, urgent in their desire to see that the Ethiopians are saved from Italian ‘civilization,’ and the Jews protected from the effects of the doctrine of ‘Blut und Rasse.’ There are more voluntary associations in Great Britain for the relief of distress than in any other country in Europe, yet we, or many of us, are curiously content to allow abuses to continue under our very noses. It is not, of course, an exact comparison. Aggression as an act of will is possibly more culpable than the passive inanition which has allowed men and women to live under filthy conditions for wretched wages. Is it ignorance which ‘dulls the native hue of resolution,’ or is it that we do not want to know, for knowledge would involve action, action which we are afraid to take?

Two newspapers lie before me, in one the reported evidence before the Tribunal inquiring into the alleged leakage of Budget information. ‘In 1931, the witness went on to say, he insured in the event of the National Party having a majority of 170 or over at the election, paying a premium of seventy guineas for an insured amount of £700. He also insured in March 1932, against any reduction in the standard rate of income-tax, paying premiums of sixty guineas, and effected other insurances in 1934. During 1935 he insured in respect of a reduction in the entertainments tax, in the income-tax, on the

General Election taking place before January 1st, 1936, paying premiums of £5,388 to insure to the extent of £12,340. In the present year his first insurance was on the Monday, when he risked £2,700 to receive approximately £300 if there was no increase in income-tax. He insured to receive in the event of any increase the sum of £6,950, and in respect of that insurance he believed he paid £1,709 in premiums. In respect of tea he insured to receive £1,150 for a payment of £259 17s. 6d.'

In the other, conditions in a working man's home are described: 'There were several cases of ten adults and children living in one room. And what "rooms" some of them were! One top room, with six people, was just under a railway, and its one window had to be kept closed because the engine sparks flew in and set fire to the bed-clothes. A family (parents, four girls from thirteen to twenty-one, and two boys aged six and nine) who had lived in the same basement for nineteen years were all under the doctor. I was shown a slum cottage where the children slept in the attic in the winter to avoid the rats in the basement, and in the basement in the hot weather because the rats downstairs are less fearful than the bugs upstairs. . . . When a death occurs there is often no place for the coffin but the one table. It releases the bed, where the living and the dying need no longer be together.'

It may or may not be advisable to gamble on the Stock Exchange, but that certain individuals, not morally or spiritually of any special value to the community, should be enabled to pass their time and spend their money in such a way when there are others living in the manner quoted in the last extract, offends every instinct of justice and propriety. Our fundamental problem is not one of economics but of morals. We need no longer ask, is it possible economically to have a better distribution of wealth. We must decide whether it is morally possible to



tolerate these inequalities. If the dispossessed, exacerbated by delay and shilly-shally decide to alter these conditions by violence, then the resultant anarchy must remain the responsibility of those who, like the monkeys, had eyes and saw not, ears that heard not, and mouths that spake not.

NOTE.—If the reader cannot stomach statistics it is advisable to omit Chapter I.

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## I

‘Let not the Pit shut her mouth upon me.’

Psalm lxix, 15.

IT is a most depressing fact that the results of this immense annual expenditure should amount at best to no more than the stabilization of a state of affairs presenting so many undesirable features. Prolonged unemployment is destroying the confidence and self-respect of a large part of the population, their fitness for work is being steadily lost and the anxiety of living always upon a bare minimum without any margin of resources or any hope of improvement is slowly sapping their nervous strength and their powers of resistance. Instances occur of men who have been out of employment for long periods being unable to stand the return to work. They find new conditions obtaining in the shops, they themselves are lacking in confidence and vitality, and as a result they throw up the job, often after only a few hours, although an increase in earnings means everything to them,’ wrote Euan Wallace in the report of his investigations into the industrial and social conditions of Durham and Tyneside in 1934, and before elaborating on his conclusions it may be of some advantage if the economic causes of this tragic situation are briefly described. It is not necessary to be an economist to understand them, they are patent to the eye of any man and find their witness in derelict pits, broken coke-ovens and the men idling at the street corners.

The Ministry of Labour divides Great Britain into eight divisional areas and at the end of 1935 the four divisions to the West and North, i.e., Wales, North-East, North-West and Scotland included rather less than half the insured population and rather more than two-thirds

of the recorded unemployment. Even more significant, they included four-fifths of the unemployed who had exhausted their insurance and were in receipt of Unemployment Allowances.

In the County of Durham including Tyneside 160,530 persons are registered as unemployed out of a total insured population of 522,420, in other words, one out of every three workers cannot be absorbed into the industrial organization of the area; but these figures fail to reveal the gravity of the situation, for some 60,000 have been out of work for more than two years and 40,000 for more than four years. The cost of providing the minimum subsistence to maintain life for this considerable number of men and their dependents amounts to some nine million pounds a year, or about £4 per head for every inhabitant of the whole of the area—men, women and children. Of this total £1,715,188 is provided through the medium of Public Assistance Committees, and it is small wonder that the Public Assistance rates average 8s. 6d. in the £, and swallow up between 30% and 50% of the rates received by the local authorities. To an appreciable degree the poor are compelled to support the poor.

The cause of the depression is not obscure. It is on account of the region's dependence on certain localized industries, which for one reason or another no longer require the same man power. They have too many eggs in too few baskets. The industries—coal, shipping, ship-building—have all suffered since the War, a loss of markets so extensive and rapid that it has proved impossible for them to adjust their organization and productive capacity to the change. The extent of the reduction in output of the Durham coalfield and rough approximation of the distribution of its trade as between coal export and coal used for home consumption is shown by the following figures:

	1929 tons	1933 tons	<i>Reduction in 1933 tons</i>	<i>Percentage of 1929</i>
Coal raised	39,001,000	27,606,000	11,395,000	29
Shipments	24,675,000	17,641,000	7,034,000	28
Inland	14,326,000	9,965,000	4,361,000	30

The extent to which Durham gas coal and coking coal can recover a share of foreign markets is dependent upon international conditions and even the most sanguine prophet could not foretell any marked increase in the demands for this product in the near future. It is possible that as far as the demand for coal for home consumption is concerned the present armaments policy of the government, which will entail an increase in the production of coal and steel, will create an increased market for coking coal. On the other hand the Ministry of Mines affirms that it would be rash to anticipate, upon the findings now available, more than a 60% recovery of the loss in output which occurred between 1929 and 1933. In the opinion of many informed observers even this estimate is optimistic.

Continued improvement in the industrial processes concerned with the gas industry has economized the amount of coal necessary to produce that commodity. In 1933 the authorized gas undertakings in this country made 30% more gas than they did in 1913, but they used only 2½% more coal in the manufacture of that gas. Even in the sphere of domestic consumption, improved technical practices have caused a reduction in the amount of coal consumed: For example, in 1913, eighty-two cwts of coal were consumed in this country per head of the population, but by 1934 the figure had dropped to seventy-one cwts.

The fall in the figures of the export trade are due not only to the systems of economic nationalism which are being fostered throughout the world, but to the fact that the national development of the coal industry in other

parts of the world has progressed enormously in the last twenty years. For example, in Germany in 1913 the production of lignite coal amounted to 87 million metric tons and in 1934 this had increased to 137 million. In Canada the figure has risen from 193 thousand tons to 2,905 thousand tons. Perhaps the most striking example of this change is to be found in Russia; in 1913 they imported approximately six million tons of coal from this country and to-day not only take no coal from us, but have increased their production from 29 million metric tons in 1913 to 93 million metric tons in 1930 and compete with us in Mediterranean markets and for the supply of anthracite coal to Canada.

The cause of this depression does not lie entirely in the falling off of export trade, but in the mechanization of the mines themselves. In 1913 there were 2,895 coal cutting machines in use, which produced 8·5% of the total amount of coal cut, while in 1934 the number of machines had risen to 7,406, which produced 47% of the total coal brought to the surface.

Moreover, in the western part of the Durham coalfield many pits are worked out, or the cost of production, due to the difficulty of working the seam, has risen to such an extent that the pits have been closed and dismantled.

In this neighbourhood out of the thirty-three pits which just after the war were employing an average of 250 men each, seventeen have been shut down for good, the machinery left to decay and the twelve thousand men who originally earned their livelihood in them stand idle. Only four of the thirty-three are working with a full quota of men and their future is, at the best, uncertain.

As a result of these factors the coal industry finds itself unable to make sufficient trading profit to maintain technical efficiency and adaptability; and new industries have not developed extensively or rapidly enough to fill the

vacuum. There has been some recovery, but in the country as a whole the coal-mining industry is employing half a million men less than it did in 1923. In Durham and Tyneside the total number of persons unemployed in the shipbuilding, engineering and coal-mining industries is approximately 100,000. If 1929 be taken as a standard post-war year and the period June 1932 to June 1933 the peak period of unemployment, the live register shows the following figures for unemployed workers in all trades.

June 24, 1929	80,115
June 27, 1932	196,157
June 26, 1933	192,404
June 25, 1934	165,875
December 16, 1935	152,273

In order therefore to get back to the 1929 figure—when the total ‘unemployed’ in Great Britain was still above the million mark—a total of some 75,000 must be removed from unemployment, and even on the assumption that the reported progress will continue we shall have in 1937 some 80,000 unemployed men whose industrial efficiency and employability cannot fail to be much lower than it is to-day.

The cause of this unemployment cannot be explained merely by inefficiency in the industries themselves, nor can it be seriously maintained that the causes are transient and the problem one which will solve itself in time. It will not cure the trouble to leave the industries to re-organize themselves and to wait better times. To take one specific question only: there are pits in the West Auckland area where coal is submerged and there seems to be general agreement that the flooding which is putting these pits out of action will eventually affect the working of the pits further east, ‘but the ownership of royalties and the lack of real community interest has so far put

any question of a joint economical scheme of pumping for the whole area outside the question of practical politics.'

It is impossible to estimate the surplus quantity of labour in the coalfields until annual production is organized with the interests of the trade as a whole rather than the sectional interests as its primary concern. Though it may actually increase the number of men displaced for the time being, such reform is essential if the interests both of the owner and worker are to be considered. The best pits must be brought to full production and the worst pits eliminated, thus ensuring better working arrangements and higher wages for the men employed, and demonstrating to the unemployed that the chances of reabsorption are so remote that they can no longer hope, as they do at present with some justification, that the pits may reopen. Destruction of such hope, if coincident with intelligently organized plans to transfer labour either within the county or to other parts of the country, will enable attempts to solve the problem of over population to meet with some likelihood of success. All efforts to assist this admirable end have been frustrated by the number of royalty owners and the divergence of their interests from those of the lessees of mining rights. In the words of Euan Wallace's report 'a scheme for the ownership of royalties appears to be an essential preliminary to any action; it might by itself enable such action to be taken; but it is clear that without it nothing effective can be done.'

The industry must bear the responsibility of this and other inefficiencies but the real tests of comparative efficiency are ability to face foreign competition in the home markets and abroad; and ability to pay good wages. Judged by these tests the depressed industries have the best record of all; foreign competition has never caught up in their domestic market; the British coal-

mining industry was the only export coal industry that mattered before the war. British ships dominated the seas and the British shipbuilding industry built more than half the total tonnage constructed. All were comparatively high wage industries. It is difficult to believe, therefore, that the cause of the difficulties lie in any fundamental economic incapacity or ineptitude of the population in these areas. Any further examination of the causes of their loss of trade would confirm the fact that the cause lies substantially outside the industry itself and they might therefore have expected post-war governments to have made their needs the primary concern of economic policy. Even on *laissez-faire* principles there was a case for exceptional action.

It is only with difficulty that an estimate of profits can be discovered, because while the owners declare they are running at a loss the miners deny it. For example, in the 'Miners Two Bob,' published by the Labour Research Department, figures are given to show that considerable profits are still being made by those who have money invested in this industry. 'The Easington Coal Company has a total capitalization of £990,000, £30,000 is paid out regularly on Debentures. Recent Preference dividends have been: 1929-30 25 %, 1931 12½ %, 1932 10 %, 1933 12½ %. The ordinary dividends have been : 1929-30 20 %, 1931 7½ %, 1932 5 %, 1933 7½ %.'

Moreover their experience of the owners' methods does not incline them to the belief that they would continue to keep the pits working on humanitarian grounds alone, nor is it believed that the coal owner would carry on for any appreciable time at a trading loss rather than combine with other districts to enable them to rationalize the industry and, fixing a decent pithead price, show a profit. They do not consider the owners to be philan-



thropists and in the words of J. E. Swann, Secretary of the Durham Miners' Association, 'Men whose earnings have been depressed may be pardoned if they become suspicious about the financial handling of the industry. The great losses for years leads to doubt. It creates the impression that certain interlaced concerns are prepared to carry deficits on coal, provided certain ancillary concerns in which they are interested may profit. To me there is something wrong, morally and organically, with an industry which can work year in and year out at a loss. Certain minimum percentages have been paid to the workers but inadequate as wages are, consistently to show the rate of loss, compels the most subtle of economists to pause and think and become more baffled the more they think.'

Unemployment in the coal industry is of a unique character and requires extraordinary treatment. The Miners' Unions have made three positive suggestions for its cure. They believe, in the first place, that the ultimate solution depends on the creation of new industries in the depressed areas which will have coal as their basis. Oil and petrol from coal either by Low Temperature Carbonization or by the Hydrogenation process adopted by the Imperial Chemical Industries' plant at Billingham, the extension of by-product industries, coal-tar, creosote, sulphur, ammonia, which in their turn provide the raw material for dyes, explosives, chemical and plastic materials, used in modern furnishings and radio industries. These industries, they affirm, should be placed near the coal mines and coal carbonization plants rather than scattered all over the country with consequent increased transport charges and lack of unified direction.

They realize that such industries cannot be developed in a day and urge that immediate remedial measures be put into effect which will not prejudice the future orienta-

tion of the industry but which will relieve the present desperate situation. In the words of Mr. Joseph Jones, President of the Mineworkers Federation of Great Britain, 'There are three such measures:

(a) A national scheme of pensions for all the older men in the industry.

(b) The raising of the age of entry into the pits with the raising of the school-leaving age as a natural corollary to raising the pit age.

(c) A reduction in the daily hours of work.

'These three proposals, together, would go a long way indeed to relieve the immediate problem of unemployment in the industry. The first two would cost money, while the last would necessitate raising the efficiency of the industry to the utmost degree. I believe that the country would be prepared to find the money, or at least would not desire the whole burden to be put upon the over-burdened shoulders of the miners who are still in employment.'

It is not however my purpose to become involved in a technical discussion of the workings of the coal trade, such a question lies beyond the control of the ordinary citizen. I am concerned rather with the effects of this depression on the lives of men and women. None the less, there are two factors in the objective situation to which I think it is necessary to call attention, the condition of 'worklessness' and the condition of 'poverty.' These are old problems whose incidence has not been limited to modern industrial life. There has always been poverty, and most men have had leisure, but their conjunction in the phenomenon of 'unemployment' provides a unique problem apparently unknown on anything but a limited scale before the industrial revolution. With regard to 'worklessness.' I employ this word because I want to call attention to one special aspect of unemployment.

This condition in which large numbers of our fellow countrymen find themselves, would probably fill a visitor from another planet with as much surprise as anything which he could find in this strange world of ours. Men—and women—not physically or mentally sick, but in the full possession of their powers and willing to work—are forced to remain idle. For what reason? Because no one will purchase their labour. Ability, capacity and skill on the one hand, and a society defective for goods and needing men's services on the other; and yet with all our wealth, science, experience and so on, this situation has so far proved incapable of solution. The men and women deteriorate and the sore infects the whole body politic. I am not proposing any 'solution' for this problem, but I feel that only when a knowledge of the suffering which it inflicts lies heavily on the conscience of every man and woman in this country, causing them to demand that such a thing should not be, then and then only will a solution be found for it, and it is the business of all men to see that this conscience is aroused.

The second factor is that of poverty, poverty of the unemployed. Here again I am not presenting a solution. I am aware of the alleged difficulties of raising the rate of benefit or allowance. All I want to do is to call attention to it and repeat that a family which is living on Insurance Benefit or Public Assistance is living in poverty and that no amount of talking about scales and calories will alter the fact. Indeed they have nothing to do with it. How many calories does a man need to prevent his falling into a condition of mental and spiritual poverty? Men and women who are living in poverty are doing so, not because they have committed a crime or refused to work, but because our present organization of society implies that if a man cannot sell his labour and live well, then he must exist on a pittance and live badly.

Unemployed men and women probably suffer most, but their condition should not blind us to the fact that thousands of men who are in work, often exacting and dangerous work, are paid monstrously low wages. In the County of Durham there are men who work five shifts a week and draw a wage which is no more, and in some cases less, than they would have drawn had they been unemployed. The tragedy of Durham lies not alone in derelict pits and idle hands, but in villages which even when relatively prosperous were ugly, overcrowded and insanitary and in the conditions of labour which force men to work for a weekly wage which is grossly inadequate by comparative, let alone any absolute, standard. The increased 'labour-saving machinery' has imposed a greater strain on those who work it, output has to be speeded up at the expense of safety—the facts quoted by Sir Stafford Cripps in connection with the Gresford Colliery disaster should be borne in mind by those who imagine that the existence of a specific government department precludes the possibility of faulty safety devices. Mining is the most dangerous of all industrial occupations. In 1932 out of a total of 807,848 men employed in the industry there were 907 fatal accidents, or more than one per thousand men employed, 'the miners', as has been said, 'are always in the trenches.'

The purpose of this chapter has been to outline very briefly the economic causes of distress in the county and to indicate certain suggestions to remedy it which have been made in the past. It is not the purpose either of this chapter or indeed of the book as a whole to put forward any solution to this economic problem; that is the province of the economist and the statesman. On the other hand it is of importance that the ordinary citizen should be acquainted with the conditions which obtain in this part of England and if he is moved to the con-

viction that they demand the immediate attention of those in whose power such action lies, then it is his duty to take whatever part he can in demanding that this situation should be tackled without delay.

I have heard it argued that the conditions of poverty, overcrowding and disease which are to be found in England to-day are unknown to that section of the community who have not been brought into personal contact with them, and that if they were known public opinion would have been aroused to demand their removal. It is not necessary to be an economist or a politician to be aware of these problems, all that is required are eyes, ears and some imagination. It is not the job of the ordinary man to delve in the deep waters of economic and fiscal policy, but it is his responsibility, once he has become acquainted with the facts, to demand that the experts produce a policy which will rectify these abuses.

It has often been said that it is the Government's responsibility to deal with unemployment, and this has on occasion been used as an excuse either by individuals or by groups to shirk the unpleasant responsibility of doing something about it themselves; and by doing something about it I do not mean advancing economic theories to an unresponsive public, but by drawing the attention of Members of Parliament, the press and industrialists to the situation and insisting that the matter receive attention.

The Government are the elected representatives of the people and demonstrably sensitive to their will; action will be taken when they are convinced that public opinion demands it and that their Fabian tactics of delaying, in the hope of matters righting themselves, are abhorrent even to those unaffected directly by the situation but alive to its urgency.

No book, no newspaper, no spoken word can present an adequate picture of what home and labour conditions

mean in the lives of the working class and the unemployed to-day. Only some form of personal experience can give a true picture; and as it is obviously impossible for this to be done on anything but a very limited scale, the written word must act as an inadequate substitute.

Prolonged and intense unemployment affects not only the individual and group relationship and the physical and spiritual health of its victims, but imposes a burden on the local authority which I propose to examine in some detail. Similar conditions obtain in Tyneside, South Wales and Lanarkshire but space forbids more than a description of the difficulties faced by one typical authority and the urgent need to relieve its situation.

The population served by the Durham County Council—the geographical county excluding the County Boroughs of Gateshead, Sunderland, South Shields, Darlington and West Hartlepool—is approximately one million. Of this number some 260,210 are insured workers, and on December 16th, 1935, 78,774 were unemployed. One out of every three men are idle and some 30,000 have been out of work for over three years. In some districts the percentage is considerably higher. The area round Bishop Auckland has a population of 63,000 and 10,000 insured workers, and has nearly 6,000 on the live register and 80% of this total have been unemployed for more than a year. In more restricted areas the position is even worse and the villages are not only derelict but have little chance of either a revival in their original industry or the introduction of new occupations. Butterknowle has a population of 1,625 and 32% of the registered unemployed have been out of work for over five years. In the village of Leasingthorne, with a population of 585, the annual cost of Transitional Payments and Public Assistance is £9,952, or approximately £17 per annum for every man, woman and child. 98% of those on the live

register have ceased to be eligible for Unemployment Insurance.

In March 1936 the net expenditure of the County Council had reached £4,758,529 including £1,457,136 for elementary education and £1,380,930 for public assistance. Government grants for the year totalled £2,826,875, which meant that the ratepayers of a county in which 30% of the wage earners were unemployed had to find £1,931,674. In the sphere of public health not only have the obligations of the local authority increased from an expenditure of £13,540 in 1914 to an expenditure of £247,333 in 1935, but the poverty and destitution of the county necessitates the provision of health services on a scale which the more prosperous districts have not yet had to consider, and which the Council are unable to provide in proper measure because that same poverty prevents the raising of the requisite funds. Children growing up in these conditions need every health service a statutory authority can provide, expectant and nursing mothers have need of clinical benefits. In other parts of the country a smaller percentage of the total population make use of these services; in Durham County they are required by almost all. Low rates of wages compel employed as well as unemployed to make use of the provisions for the supply of milk to children attending infant welfare clinics, and though these prove beneficial it does not ease the burden of the cost of public health which lies heavy on the county authority. To ensure that the inhabitants of isolated villages receive adequate services imposes a greater strain on the Council's resources than would be the case where the population is grouped in large urban centres, and its efforts to ensure the right standard have been hampered by low ratable values and the general poverty of the ratepayers.

It is however in the sphere of Public Assistance that

the Council's difficulties are most clearly shown. In the year 1933-34 the cost of public assistance was £1,223,169 which, even after the deduction of the Special Distressed Areas Grant, compelled the authority to level a rate of 8s. 6d. in the pound as against 8s. 5d. required for all other general county purposes. The comparative figure of the whole of England and Wales including the Special Areas was 2s. 8½d. in the £. In the Spennymoor district with a population of 28,911 the cost of Public Assistance alone totals £37,951. In 1933 some 30% of the men unemployed in the county were in receipt of Public Assistance. Moreover 73 per thousand of the population are in receipt of public assistance compared with an average of 25·4 per thousand for the administrative counties of England and Wales, and when the fact that only 3% of the dwelling houses have ratable value exceeding £20, and that over 75% are rated on less than £10 is considered, 'it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the burden constitutes an almost unsurmountable barrier.' (CMD 4728.)

Of the total expenditure of rates and grants the Durham ratepayers provide 63% or 10% more than the average in other counties of England and Wales. This burden is imposed not on ratepayers with an assured and adequate income, but on unemployed pitmen endeavouring to support life in their families on exiguous allowances. Even when employed, their yearly earnings only averaged £104 19s. 2d. per man for 1934—a figure which included the earnings of youths as well as adults and of the higher as well as the lower paid grades.

It has been suggested in some quarters that the authority is extravagant in its expenditure, although with a population living under such conditions it is difficult to understand how any amount spent on the essential services of education, public assistance and health can be



considered as luxuries. Indeed it is only by increased expenditure that the Council can prevent the decay of body and atrophy of mind which threatens the multitude of men, women and children in the county. The nation which can afford capital ships can afford to provide its people with reasonable social services. One instrument of destruction like the *Rodney* costs the taxpayer an amount equal to the support of all the unemployed in Durham County for a year. Moreover the Council are obliged to provide for expenditure over which they have no control. The Council have no means of controlling the number who fulfil the conditions and, therefore, must have relief either in institutions or by granting outdoor relief. Other instances are the salaries of teachers in public and elementary and secondary schools which are on a scale controlled by and applied to the whole country by the Board of Education at the recommendation of the Burnham Committee, on which both teachers and local authorities have representatives. Police pay is another item of expenditure governed by a National Committee which is composed of representatives of the Government Departments concerned, Police authorities and Police officers. The total expenditure under these headings amounts in Durham County to £1,773,136 or 35% of the total gross annual expenditure of the Council.

It is impossible for Durham to bear the whole cost of the burden which the economic blizzard has placed upon it. The responsibility is not local but national and facile announcements of returning prosperity should not blind us to such facts as I have quoted. The economic health of the nation cannot be judged by an examination of those parts which are enjoying some measure of prosperity, but only when its condition is considered as a whole. A man who has nothing wrong with his feet, but whose arms are

paralysed is not a healthy man, and indeed the results of the disability in his upper half will ultimately affect the efficiency of his lower member. So with the body politic, modern factories and industries in the South and Midlands are no compensation for dereliction in the North and, indeed, are ultimately dependent on the revival of prosperity in these areas. The security of the nation in peace and war depends on the heavy industries of coal and steel and iron and their capacity for expansion. It depends also on the supply of skilled and efficient labour in these industries. Lipsticks, wireless sets, bathing suits and motor-car tyres are a poor substitute in time of national stress for ships and steel. Industry must be organized for peace with the same urgency as it would be organized for war. On the lowest rung of self-interest the problem of the Special Areas demands the urgent attention of those who have it in their power, had they the will, to find the solution.

## II

‘They have digged a pit for my soul.’

Jeremiah xviii, 20.

THE cottage contained a living-room and a scullery and two bedrooms, a backyard and an outside earth-closet. It had been the home of a man, woman and six children for twelve years. The furniture downstairs comprised a kitchen table, two kitchen chairs, a form and a dilapidated plush armchair, obtained when the local cinema was sold up. The floor was covered, or partly covered, with cheap linoleum, and if the baby sat on her mother’s knee there was just room for the whole family to be seated at the same time. Upstairs in the large bedroom a double bed, mattress and two blankets; in the smaller, two four-foot mattresses on the floor and a mixed pile of bedding. For five years the husband had no work and during that period four children had been born into the home. They were decently dressed but possessed no proper footwear, only rubber-soled plimsolls. A good fire kept the house warm but the only food in the house seemed to be a loaf of bread, a small packet of tea and a bowl of bacon fat. No water was laid on and there was no gas, electricity or drainage. The rent including rates was 8s. 6d. a week. The house was one of a row of forty all similar in build and three men in the street were employed. Ten had not worked for five years, twelve for three, six young men of 18-23 had never worked since they left school. Fourteen children were tubercular, four men received disability pensions, six women had more than eight children and the average number of people sleeping in a room was five. The village had no shops, no public meeting place, no playground, no cinema or public house. The total population was approxi-

mately 500. One hundred and ten were insured workers and eighteen were employed intermittently in a colliery three miles distant. Their earnings averaged one and eightpence a week more than they would have received from the Public Assistance Committee.

Four of us sat in the living-room watching the fire, the host, his two neighbours and myself. They told quietly and without haste (broad vowels and an occasional word of pitmatic), three tales not unusual, worthy of remembrance.

'My grandfather came from Jedburgh and my mother from Whitehaven, I'm proper north-country. My father was born at Crook but moved out here when he married to work in the colliery which was new. He was killed in the pit when I was a boy but I can remember the funeral, the brass band very solemnly playing the same tune we heard on the wireless when King George was buried. Sad but making you feel it was grand to die. We went back to Crook to live with our grandparents and then my brother got a job as a haulier in the colliery near here and I was taken on as a doorboy—that is, doors were used for ventilation and I had to open the few doors in my charge to allow trams to pass through—so we moved back into the village. When I was eighteen the War came and my brother and I went down to Newcastle and enlisted. I joined the D.L.I. but he thought that his work with horses in the pit made him superior and he joined the cavalry. He never rode a horse after he went to France, they put them on bicycles and he was killed at Ypres. I got interested in signalling and was sent to Egypt. I was wounded in 1917 and in hospital for six months. Then I went to France with the 5th Durhams, I only got out in February 1918 and was captured in March when the Germans broke through at Peronne. We nearly starved that summer and I got back here just

after Christmas. A lot of men had come into the village during the War, but there was work for all and good money. I married and began a family.

'Then came the strike and we didn't work for nine months, we got no dole and no relief and things were bad, my wife had a miscarriage and had to go into the Infirmary for a month and I had all the children to look after. I got work again early in 1927, but the seam was closed a year later and I've not worked since. I'm forty now, but I'm too old to start a new trade. I don't know anyone outside this village and as you know there's not much here or likely to be. It's just over seven years since I was stood off and we've lived on about thirty-six bob during that time, that's me and the wife and the six kids. The rent's not bad, eight and six, but it's replacing breakages, clothing, extra nourishment for the kids and furniture that we find it difficult to get. I've a bit of an allotment that brings us potatoes and cabbages but we don't often get meat and as for fruit you just can't buy it. The worst thing of all is that you get used to it. At first I used to feel bitter and want to do something violent. I got books from the County Library, Socialist books and works on economics. I read a lot about Russia and Communism and joined some demonstrations. But it leads to violence and you can't take risks with the authorities when you've a wife and kids. That's what makes a lot of us only armchair revolutionists. . . . I suppose if conditions worsened we might risk it, that's what Marx said, but as long as you've got the dole regular, well, you think twice before doing anything militant.

'I used to try and fool myself that education and reading were better than working in the pit, but it's not the same. We're thrown back on ourselves, every minute of the day, making decisions, that's what's wearing. Choosing what to do next. It's much easier when you've got to do

something whether you like it or not and then just choose what you'll do after working hours. I read once in a book all about some new schools where kids are allowed to do what they like all day. Well I don't think it's much catch. It wears me out, choosing what I want to do and I think it'd wear a kid out even more. I don't even know what I do want now, I've been too long out of the pit to be much good. I like outdoor work and I suppose if I could get a bit of land I could work it, but I've no capital, nothing behind me, if anything went wrong I'd be scuppered and no dole. It's the kids I worry about most, growing up in the village and no chance of a job. The girl's going into domestic work when she leaves school. I don't like her doing it, and I don't like her leaving her mother but anything's better than staying on here and marrying a fellow who's never worked nor ever likely to. As for me, I'm finished, finished at forty.'

'There's not much more hope for me,' went on one of the others, 'and I'm only thirty-five. Somebody asked my youngster what he wanted to be when he grew up, and he said he wanted to work on the dole like his father. Funny, wasn't it? But it hurt me something cruel when I thought it over. Of course with so many out of work in this village I don't feel so different from the others as I would if I lived in a big town, but the dependence on others on the dole gets me down. I remember a parson saying that suffering made you a better man, it's not done that for me. I used to trust people, believe in the disinterestedness and sincerity of Trade Union officials, Labour Party workers and ministers, but now I suspect them all. I feel they're only out for what they can get and I give them every selfish motive because I'm judging them by my own standards. I'm selfish now, and why? Because I've been so driven that I'm thinking all the time of number one or at any rate of number one's wife and kids.

I'd deceive the Means Test man if I was clever enough and I'd steal if there was anything in this village worth stealing. I don't feel happy about it because deep down I think that these people are sincere and that I've no right to other's property—but when you've lived like I've lived for four years, you alter your views a bit. Some men can fill up their time with talk, talking at the corner, talking at political meetings, talking about horses and dogs and football, always talking and not able to do a damned thing. Sooner or later you realize that all this doesn't get you anywhere and then you find there's nothing else. That's a black moment. Then there's my wife. I hang about too much and get in her way, she says she wonders why she ever married me and even why we ever had the kids. When she's nervy she threatens to do herself in, and once she swallowed twenty aspirins, thinking it would finish her off.

'I can't stop my brain going on working and it chews over the same things over and over again. I can't sleep for worrying what's going to happen to us all. I literally sweat with fear at the thought of the future. I don't blame my wife for feeling bad, she gets no release from the job of trying to make ends meet. Little things worry her, things you'd scarcely believe. She dropped a tray the other day and broke three of our four cups. I've no money to replace them. It'd cost a shilling I can't afford. So we have to drink out of one cup, one after the other, it's degrading somehow in front of the children. My son asked me "why didn't we get new cups," and couldn't understand when I said that we were too poor. "You can get them at Woolworths," he said, not understanding, and how should he, that even Woolworths' cups cost too much. When you've regular money you don't value things the same way, you break something small or it wears out and you remind yourself to get another when

you pass a shop. When you've been unemployed for a bit you find that even bootlaces cost money that might be spent on a tin of milk. I've got mine done with string now.

'The worst thing to fear happening is sickness, you're afraid to lose your money and to go on the Parish, then there's extras to buy and nothing to get them with. My wife was confined last year and we'd nothing for the baby but my best shirt and I can't wear that again !

'I was first unemployed for any length of time on May 1st, 1926, the day on which the lock-out began which led to the General Strike. I had nine months then and was desperate for work when I got it. Then I had an accident in the pit and was out for a couple of months. I worked fairly regular, about four or five shifts a week, until 1931 and then the seam closed and apart from about ten weeks road work I've done nothing since. I expect I'd be in the same position as a neighbour if I got work again, he found that the coal-cutters and pneumatic drills have speeded up the production and that if you've been out for a time you can't fit in and the others curse you for getting in the way and holding up the work.

'When I think of how much I want something to do and how I'd work for any wage or hours, I remember my young sister in London. She's got a job in a cinema, showing people to their seats in a posh theatre and she gets a pound a week. If we lived in London it wouldn't be so bad, but she has to find clothes and board and laundry out of it. When she went to the Manager and pointed out that she couldn't live decently on that wage he told her that other girls could, meaning three who lived at home. He also said that with the job she had it ought to be easy to make it up in other ways. Then you hear people wondering why we don't all flock to the South and don't like sending our children down on their own.



Better starve together decently than expose our young people to those conditions. If they moved the family, or better still, the village, and found a proper house it would be another matter. They forget we're human, not just pegs to be fitted into holes.'

'I'm rather different,' said the third, 'because as you know I'm a good bit younger. I'm twenty-three and I've been out for just over four years. The other day I was asked why I didn't join the army and see the world, and I replied that I didn't want to see the world, I wanted work in my own village. I suppose you can answer that I've not got enough guts and no spirit of adventure and all that, but I maintain that there ought to be room for a young man in industry without turning him into a soldier. I lost my father and my two uncles in the War and my mother never really got over it. I want to be a live worker not a dead lion!

'I was down the pit as a boy, as soon as I left school, but when I was eighteen I was stood off because I could demand a man's wage. I live with my uncle, he's been out for over two years, and he's not well, coal dust in his lungs and a leg that's never got over a fall in the pit ten years ago. I could go in a Training Centre I suppose and learn another trade, but I'm really needed in the home because my money helps to keep the family going and if I left they'd be in queer street. Unemployment's had a strange effect on families. When it began, families all lived together to pool their cash and make it go further, but with the Means Test you're penalized for doing that and the whole income of the household is taken into account. It leads to silly situations, sons and daughters deliberately leaving home to live in another part of the village as lodgers. Of course they don't allow that and stop your money all the same. I want to get married, but how can I ask my girl to live on the "dole," even if

we could get a house we'd have to fill it up with lodgers to make ends meet. She works down in Crook, and I suppose could carry on with her job but it's bad enough being dependent on the dole let alone being dependent on your wife.

'I had the chance of a job the other day, back at the colliery but they stood me off after two shifts. I wasn't strong enough to do the stone-work and I came back done in. Some of the other young chaps are bitter and call themselves Communists, they don't really know what they want and they haven't really thought what life will be like after the "revolution" but they feel that things can't be worse than they are now. Most of them aren't interested in politics, only in football pools and the dogs, and cutting a dash in front of the girls. They'd spend their last threepence on a game of billiards.

'I read a book the other day about the way Hitler has dealt with the unemployed. I think there's something in it. Lots of us need hardening physically and underneath we'd like to feel we were of some importance. There's a lot of work to be done and if it wasn't called task-work and we got something for cigarettes and knew our dependents weren't losing anything by us being away, I think quite a lot would chance it. Most of the men who've come back from the Ministry of Labour Camps and Centres have changed the ideas they had when they went.'

'It's all right for you,' interposed the oldest, 'you're still young enough to train for another job and you're young enough to hope. It's too late for us chaps over forty, we can't serve our time again at a new trade, we've no future to look forward to, and the past hasn't been very rosy if you've got to live on that. Surely to God someone's got the brains to think of a solution, they can't just leave us to go out of our minds. Talk, talk, always

talking and promising and quarrelling over details, and no vision or understanding of the tragedy going on up here. They have commissions and inquiries and all that but what happens? A few chaps get temporary work on sewage schemes and roads, about fifty out of ninety thousand have been settled in these land schemes in the south, a good many kids have gone off into domestic work, and as cheap labour for factories; these social service clubs provide a few with occupation and somewhere to forget their troubles—but they haven't begun to deal with the real problem. I don't know how many men were unemployed in County Durham last year, or how many have been out for over five years, but you can bet your last shilling that whatever the number out for five years in 1935, the same number's been out for six in 1936. And in 1937 they'll have been out for seven; don't they see that while they sit gassing and exploring avenues and talking up in the air that conditions are worsening and men getting driven harder and harder until they're afraid of going stark staring mad? I lie awake torturing myself, thinking what will become of us? What will become of us? God must be asleep to let men suffer so.'

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### III

'They shall eat their bread by weight and with care.'  
Ezekiel iv, 16.

**G**ORILLAS have always been considered very difficult to keep in captivity. However, we now have a fine healthy pair. But we shouldn't, I am sure, have had such a success with them if we had not given them a physiologically adequate diet. This is what each of them gets daily—2 lbs. of grapes, 2 lbs. of apples, 6 bananas, 3 oranges, some rhubarb, tomatoes, lettuce, onions and carrots, with plenty of greens, half a loaf of bread, 1 oz. of butter, 1 or 2 eggs, a quart of fresh milk (tuberculosis free and irradiated), half tin of condensed milk, a little porridge and some weak tea. In addition they get boiled chicken or meat three times a week and various vitamin and special health preparations,' Dr. Julian Huxley in *The Listener*, June 3rd, 1936, and in the same week a local miner's wife in reply to my question about her dinner that day: 'bacon bits, the bits they cut off from the end of the bacon—the parts that's likely to go bad first—and sell at 2d. a pound, but we don't often get that, it's mostly bread and margarine and jam and condensed milk and sometimes fried fish from the travelling van.'

In 1928 the Ministry of Health appointed a Commission to study the effects of unemployment in the coalfields of South Wales and Monmouthshire, a region even at that date which had suffered from prolonged dislocation of industry, and in which the effects of continuous unemployment were very severe. The results of that investigation were to the effect that despite a generally meagre diet, lacking in fresh meat, fresh milk and fresh vegetables, 'Our observations did not disclose any widespread mani-

festation of impaired health which could be attributed to insufficiency of nourishment.' The 'cases' examined in 1928 have now had a further eight years of meagre diet, and it would be interesting to read a further report on the physical conditions in the district obtaining to-day. On the other hand, in the second report of the Commissioner for Special Areas, Mr. Malcolm Stewart says 'whatever agreement or disagreement there may be among medical experts as to malnutrition it is quite certain that any person with average powers of observations, who studied the faces of these men, could not fail to see that there is something definitely wrong.' I am not qualified to challenge or support the medical views expressed on this issue, though I feel that they quickly become abstractions dealing with a situation as it ought to be rather than as it really is. Whether it should cost two or three or ten shillings a week to obtain the necessary amount of food to provide the minimum standard of life is of secondary importance. Rather I would ask the reader to consider statements of fact and to form his own judgment not on whether such an expenditure provides an adequate amount of food, but whether he or she could contemplate with equanimity the possibility of living at such a level themselves. It is not purely a question of dietetics but of justice. In the recent Report of the Rowett Research Institute, Sir John Orr concludes, 'The average diet of the poorest group comprising four and a half million people is, by the standard adopted, deficient in every constituent examined. The second group comprising nine million people is adequate in protein, fat and carbohydrates, but deficient in all the vitamins and minerals . . . complete adequacy is almost reached in group four (those families in which the expenditure on food averages 10s. per head per week) . . . a review of the state of health of the people of the different groups

suggests that, as income increases, disease and death rate decrease, children grow more quickly, adult stature is greater and general health and physique improve.'

Reflection on such a condition of affairs in an age which is wealthy beyond the wildest dreams of past generations may set us furiously to think.

There is we are told a double problem; on the one hand over-production, on the other hand as its result the mass of unemployment. We have apparently produced so much that we cannot supply a large part of our population with the adequate minimum standard of life. I have had an opportunity of observing at first hand the manner in which life is supported on the standard deemed adequate and to hear from men and women what actual resources they have to spend on the staple necessities.

Consider Mrs. Brown, her husband and small daughter, who have received during the last three years 29s. a week on which to live. When they have paid their rent 8s. 6d. and have paid for gas and coal 4s. 6d., subscribed to their clothing club 3s., and paid the necessary insurance to provide a decent funeral 2s. 6d., there remains a balance of 11s. 6d. on which to feed three of them. This works out at 3s. 10d. per person per week, and at an average of three meals per day 2d. per meal.

Consider again the Smiths, a family of five, man, wife and three children who have received 35s. a week during the past four years. When they have paid rent 11s., coal 2s. 9d., gas 1s. 2d., electric light 1s., insurance 9d., clothing club 3s., and paid the groceries bill of 8s. 6d., they have a balance of 5s. 10d. which has to provide bacon, eggs, milk, meat and vegetables. Five people, three meals a day, seven days a week. 105 meals on the seventy pence.

Mrs. Robinson tells me 'When I have paid rent, gas and coal and funeral insurance I have 10s. a week left to

feed three of us, the doctor says bread and marg. and tea isn't good for us but it is our main diet, and what most of us live on in the whole street.' She added that 'I manage to get a 2 lb. jar of jam once a month and make it last the four weeks.' My friend Mr. Turnbull said, "'What do we eat when we are out of work?'" Well for the last five years it has been bread, cheap bacon, sometimes fried fish and tea.'

It is probably true that education in dietetics would enable the wife of the unemployed man to purchase more wisely, but it is surprising to hear such a suggestion put forward as the sole contribution to the problem of malnutrition. Classes in cookery may enable women to make better use of their slender resources, but surely the most obvious method of altering this condition is to provide an allowance sufficient to give a reasonable standard of living, and which does not demand a knowledge of dietetics in the individual housewife. These cases are not new, nor are they unique, for the last fifty years similar information has been available; there is no excuse for ignorance and less for inaction once the facts are known. We excuse ourselves as John MacMurray says 'from the necessity of choice of action by dwelling upon the difficulties of our situation, the modern world is, we say, extremely complicated. The international situation is very delicate, the network of finance is terribly intricate so that only experts can understand it. We are now in the grip of unscrupulous forces that are too strong for us, and so on. But these are only excuses, we know very well how, in our private lives, we always find a host of difficulties to prevent us doing things that we don't want to do. Difficulties are reflections on our own desire to avoid action. It is the same with our national and social problems. They seem just a nest of insoluble difficulties which are too strong for us. In fact, we could solve them all, without very great difficulty the

moment we decided to do so. We have the knowledge, the material, the skill and the experience that is necessary, in abounding measure; but we have not the will to decide or the decision to act.'

'I've kept the account for you, here it is,' said the miner's wife returning me the sheet of paper I had given her the week before. 'It's not been easy to get each penny in the right place, but I hope it will show your friends what living on the dole means in our village. I expect the amounts are not quite right because I have no scales and had to borrow my neighbour's and some of the weights are missing.

'There are five of us in family, my husband and myself, two girls age six and four and baby nearly two; we need more of most of the things and some of the things we don't seem to be able to buy. My husband has been out for over three years and there doesn't seem much chance of his working again. He is not strong, and ever since the War has had trouble with his chest. He tried for a pension but was disallowed. Anyway, here is how I spent last week's money:

'Out of a total of 35s.

Rent	... 12	0	Bread	22 lbs.
Insurance	... 1	0	Meat	3 lbs.
Clothing Clubs	... 2	0	Bacon	1 lb.
Coal and gas	... 2	3	Milk (fresh)	14 pints
Soap, matches	... 3		Milk (tinned)	3 tins
Food	... 16	5	Margarine	3 lbs.
Cigarettes	... 4		Potatoes	6 lbs.
			Butter	None
			Cheese	None
			Vegetables	1 lb.
			Fruit	None
			Tea	1 lb.
			Jam	None'



It has been said more than once that nobody need starve in England, and it is true that people may be able to support life on less than the minimum standard laid down by the medical man and the physiologist, but our ideas of what constitutes 'starvation' are apt to become confused. Can a person be described as starving who drags out an existence, physically impaired and muscularly inefficient without actually dying? Is starvation to be judged according to the absolute standard of the dieticians or by relative standards according to our own needs of what we should consider sufficient for ourselves. I have been in homes on Thursday morning in which there would not be a scrap of food until the next day when the dole was paid out to the husband. Can this family be considered to starve for twenty-four hours, or are they to be regarded as 'fasting' or possibly living on the stored up food values of previous meals. There is however a simple and infallible test which can be practised by all. Decide to live at this level yourself for a week or two, agreeing to spend what an average unemployed pitman's wife has available for food on your own family, producing twenty-one meals in the week for five persons at a cost of 10s. or 12s., and then reconsider the question. Are you content that some four million men, women and children in this country should live for longer or shorter periods on such a diet, and if not, what are you going to do about it?

Moreover your experiment only touches one point of the expenditure. Try clothing yourself and your family on £2 10s. a year and make it include everything, hats, suits, underwear, stockings, overcoats, children's clothes, layettes and boots and shoes. I am not suggesting that it is wrong of you to spend a great deal more on these things, as you probably do, because you would reply that if these things were not bought more people would be unemployed. I am asking you to consider whether you think

this an adequate amount to ensure warmth and decency and whether you are content to allow others to live under such conditions.

The words of Professor V. H. Mottram may help you to a realization of the problem, 'for general purposes it may be assumed that no ordinary family buying its provisions in the open market can be adequately fed at the present time, and certainly not up to the ideal advocated by physiologists, with an expenditure of less than five shillings per week per "man" and two shillings and sixpence per week per child of one year of age. The necessary expenditure per child rises fairly rapidly to five shillings per week as the age advances to fourteen.' It will also be helpful to consider the relation between the standard laid down by the British Medical Association and the amount received by those who exist by funds provided by the State. I quote from the *Manchester Guardian* of December 14th, 1934.

	Minimum Standard (Excluding Rent)			Unemploy- ment Assistance (Without Rent)	Unemploy- ment Insurance Benefit (Including Rent)
	Fuel, Food Clothing, B.M.A. Cleaning, Total Light				
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
1. Man and wife	11 11	5 4	17 3	16 6	26 0
2. Man and wife and 1 child (2 years)	15 4	6 6	21 10	20 6	28 0
3. Man and wife and 3 children (3, 5, 7)	23 4	8 9	32 1	25 6	32 0
4. Man and wife and 4 children (5, 7, 9, 11)	25 3	9 11	35 2	29 6	34 0
5. Man and wife and 1 son of 18	18 9	6 8	25 5	24 0	40 0

The wife of an unemployed pitman wrote to me recently after her first holiday away from home for the past ten years. 'It was a godsend to get away even for a week. I don't think people realize what life is to working-class women when their husbands are out of work. I've six children, and three of them are under five. Every day I have to wash them and feed them and look after my husband and try to keep him cheerful, and keep the house clean and think out ways of making our money last the week. It goes on and on, week after week in the same way and perhaps it's best that I don't look ahead too much or I should be tempted to put my head in the gas oven. On this holiday I was able to put my feet up after dinner ! I have never done it before. Other people did the washing up and the cooking, and twice I had what I'd never had in my life before—breakfast in bed !'

Behind each expression of gratitude for such simple experience lies the tragedy that they are denied to thousands. To provide men and women with a reasonable standard of comfort is surely not beyond the resources at our disposal. The working class do not clamour for Cartier bracelets and limousines, but for a minimum reasonable standard in the necessities of life.

To quote the rise in the standard of living during the last generation, the number of new houses built and the development of the social services is not an answer but an insult to the multitude both employed and unemployed who live to-day in constant insecurity, overcrowded dwellings, and under circumstances which many would not tolerate for their domestic pets. It is not helpful to suggest that conditions have been worse in the past and will be better in the future when there is no real will to alter things for those who suffer to-day. If there was a will for national reconstruction and social justice it would express itself in action. We show sympathy and even

repentance, but what feeling has regret without restitution? For too many of us the attitude of mind described by J. B. Priestley as 'Damn you I'm all right' is the substitute for clear thinking. If the system of society which excludes from all opportunities of life rather than mere existence some three millions of its constituents, cannot rectify the position without altering the economic basis on which that society is built, then the disinherited have the right to demand that the basis be altered to one which will give to all men and women the opportunities which at the present they are denied.

'T— S—, aged sixty-four, was found dead in his allotment hut with razor wounds in his arms and neck. His son-in-law said that he had been worried on account of some papers which he had received from the Labour Exchange relating to his unemployment pay.

'The deputy-coroner recorded a verdict of "suicide, there being no evidence to show the state of the deceased's mind." '

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## IV

'Wherein now is thy condition better than ours?'  
*Bunyan.*

### I

THE village consists of some 300 houses, they are sturdily built, the older of local stone, the more recent of cheap bricks, there are no gardens either in front or behind and the door opens directly on to the street. The sanitary arrangements are primitive, across the back street stand the privies and whatever the weather, however many the spectators, it is necessary for every man, woman and child, sick or healthy, to run the gauntlet of publicity from house to privy. The streets are unpaved, black with coal-dust in the summer, thick with mud in winter, across the way from house to house are suspended clothes lines on which the family laundry jerks of a Monday. Houses are clustered round the pit-head and the slag-tip rising a couple of hundred feet, darkening the sky with its bulk, dominates the scene. There is not a tree, not a blade of grass to be seen, drabness everywhere and within a five-minutes walk the open fields. It is difficult to escape the impression that the houses were built and the village planned with no other purpose than to provide the necessary habitation at the minimum cost for the mine workers, whose labour was required in the local pit. There was no consideration of men as men with needs other than shelter from the weather and somewhere to sleep when they were not at work in the mine.

Now the cage no longer rises swiftly in the shaft, two-thirds of the pitmen who were originally employed stand idle on the corner. Their conversation ranges from football-pools to Sunderland's league chances and back, via the form of a local whippet, to football-pools again. The



'MORE ENGLISHMEN'S HOMES'

*To face page 36*



'sporting man' is no longer the athlete or even the spectator, he is now the backer, risking his pennies in the hope of a few shillings reward. Before condemning men for indulging in such luxuries when their means are straitened it is wise to reflect on the intolerable boredom of their existence and its grinding, monotonous poverty. When every penny counts, the addition of a few shillings can produce an effect out of all proportion to the amount, it means variation in diet, new boots, new clothes for children and a chance to replace household needs. Moreover the gambler is always hoping that 'this time' he will be successful. It is a poor substitute as an incentive to living but the responsibility for reducing men to this level does not lie wholly at the doors of the unemployed themselves.

Last Christmas I was invited to the village for the children's treat organized by the local Service Club. The money had been sent from the Hertfordshire Appeal for Durham and the party was held in a reconditioned hall.

The room must have contained three hundred children some singing, some eating and many more shouting. They were being shepherded in batches towards the tables on which the tea was spread by a dozen men who marshalled them, fed them and, after giving each a toy, handed them back to the waiting parent at the door. It was the Christmas Party given to the children of the village by the Service Club, the only party most of them would enjoy that winter. A sandwich, a glass of lemonade and a Woolworth toy produced a party whose value could not be assessed in terms of the cost in pence.

The local schoolmaster watched them from the shadows. 'It's good to see them enjoying themselves now, though it makes it more cruel to think what the future holds for many of them. Their fathers and their grandfathers worked in this village, but there'll be no



work here for these when they grow up. The pit used to take 800 men and boys, now it only employs 180. Of every ten boys leaving school just after the War, seven went down the mine, now they only take two or three. There's no hope for them here.'

'It's not a good atmosphere to grow up in, fathers and brothers hanging about and little chance of many of them working again.'

'Do you find many children suffering from under-nourishment?'

'Not many, but then it's difficult to judge. I think that the children get first consideration and the mothers and fathers do without. Much worse than malnutrition is the housing, bad sanitation and complete lack of privacy.'

'What about clothes?'

'Well, look at them, they're decently dressed and warm enough—although there are some, like the child in the corner, whose jersey is threadbare. One of the greatest needs are shoes, many parents can only afford rubber-plimsolls and in wet weather they're no substitute for leather. I've met several extreme cases where the mother and daughter have only one set of underclothes between them.'

'Teeth and eyes?'

'With the children, pretty good, they get attention and examination at the School Clinic, the difficulty is to get the parents to agree to stoppings. They're suspicious as they are of vaccination and inoculation. Dentistry means extraction to many of them. No, the teeth of the older people are much more of a problem. They can't get false-teeth, of course, except at a prohibitive price and consequently delay having their bad teeth removed till the last minute. Just take a look round the room at the teeth of the older men and women—most of them need attention.'

'Do you find much objection to young people leaving the village?'

'Quite a bit, you see the family spirit is very strong in Durham and most of the population of these parts have lived in the district all their lives although their fathers and grandfathers emigrated from Norfolk and Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Scotland when there was work to be had by all and to spare. If a boy or girl goes south, to London or the Midlands, it's a big wrench and the parents don't know when they'll see them again. Naturally, they feel there ought to be work for them nearer home.'

## II

'I'd hewed coals for fifteen years and when I was first stood off I thought I was unfitted for anything else, many of us are like that; our fathers and grandfathers worked in the pit and although there's a variety of jobs, putting and hewing and shifting, we think that there's no other work we can do. And again, we don't know what conditions are like in other work, all we know is working in the pit or standing idle—and there's no question of which is best. Now since I've been out, and more so since I got another job, I've realized how much worse are the miner's conditions than those of a good many occupations. Just think for a moment what working underground hewing coals must be like. You go down in the cage, a drop of anything up to half-a-mile, you walk along the seam perhaps two miles from the shaft—crouching most of the way—till you get to the coal-face. Off with your clothes, every stitch of them, because you'll be in a lather of sweat after a few minutes. Then perhaps the coal-seam is only a couple of feet in height and you lie on your side, so tightly wedged that you can't move your head more than a few inches, and start hewing.

You go hard all the time because it's piece-rate work and you want more than the guaranteed minimum wage of seven and a halfpenny a day. I never stopped to eat much, it isn't much of a place to have a meal, coal dust everywhere, all over your body, your hair, your face, in your lungs, eyes and ears. As you sweat, and it's hot enough down there without exertion, the dust cakes the sweat on your body. Then shovelling the coals into the tubs often in a space not wide enough to stand upright. Six hours of this and then the shift's over, two miles crouching walk back to the shaft, tired with the work and sticky with heat, up the shaft and out into the cold air, it may be night or day—depends which shift you're working. All the time there's danger of falls, gas, water, explosion and the chance of getting miners' nystagmus or silicosis in your lungs. And at the end of the week, after stoppages, you'll be lucky to have more than thirty-five bob and there's thousands working to-day to get less. In some ways, of course, conditions are better than they were, a hundred years ago the coals were pulled by men, crawling along the galleries with a rope round their neck which passed between their legs and was attached to the tub. But in some ways things are worse than they were a few years ago. The owners are speeding up production; electric cutters, pneumatic drills and mechanical conveyors are all called 'Labour-saving'—it's true they save labourers but they increase the strain on those who're left. And the noise! Imagine one of those road drills working in a narrow tunnel and you'll understand what it's like.

'Well, after it's over you walk home and have a bath, and the heat dries the sweat off your clothes, and the coal dust flies all over the house, and it's hard on the wife to keep a place clean when that happens every day. We used to earn good money. I've brought home six pounds

before now, but that's passed, there's not many earned that sort of money since the strike. I think men ought to be paid good money for that sort of a job and not the pittance they get to-day.

'There's a fair number who would get more on the dole than if they worked. A man's paid in the pit according to the amount of coal he can produce or on a datal wage without regard to his family responsibility; a single man gets the same as a man with six children. If they're on the dole one would get seventeen shillings and the other anything up to two pounds four, and yet when they're working they might both bring back thirty-six shillings. It pays the single man, or the man without a family, to work, and it pays a good many fellows with large families not to work. The dole is, in some ways, having a bad effect—men are accepting the lower standard of life, becoming satisfied with drawing a regular pension from the State; they're becoming demoralized, especially the younger men. If there had been no dole, men would have been forced to move away to other districts to find work and they would also have raised Hell until the Government found work for them. The dole is doing more to dope the workers than social service, and I sometimes think it's a very two-edged weapon. It helps to keep the unemployed quiet but it deprives them of their manhood. There are men in my village who'd have broken my jaw if I'd offered them a pair of boots twelve years back, now they'd take anything. They've lost their self-respect. The Durham pitman has always been noted for his independence, sometimes he's been almost too independent. But that's going now, and in some ways it's the greatest tragedy of all, men who earned a hard living, were disciplined by the iron discipline of the pit, were proud of themselves and their work, now coming cap in hand to take anything that's offered. It's a bloody business.'

## III

'I married when I was eighteen and have never been out of Durham County in my life. As a matter of fact for the last four years I've not been more than five miles from the village. I'm thirty-two now and I've had ten children, although only six are alive. Ever since I was married I've either been carrying, feeding or weaning a baby, and I'm about worn out with it. My husband's been unemployed for three years, and although he's only thirty-eight, his hair's grey and he's an old man. We're on the Means Test and they allow us thirty-five shillings a week, my husband has a war disability and gets an additional pension of eight shillings. We used to get our house free when he was working, but we have to pay nine shillings for it now, the same applies to coals which we had for nothing and which now costs three shillings a week in winter. I'm a good housekeeper and I don't think any of us can be said to starve, we get enough but there's not much variety. My father works on a farm near York and sends us eggs and meat, and sometimes when he comes up to see us he brings a pot or two of jam and some butter. We're always afraid that this will be found out and that the Means Test man will knock a shilling or two off my husband's money. Afraid, that's the word, we're always afraid something's going to happen to reduce our little money. When my husband was working we were always fearing unemployment and the dole, and now we're afraid of losing that. I can't believe that people would let us starve, the money must come from somewhere, but I'm haunted by the thought that it might not. I read in our paper the other day of a man who did himself in after being out for a long time, he was afraid his money would be reduced because his son was working. My neighbour has threatened to do herself in several times, I don't suppose she will but it's not

nice to live in an atmosphere where people talk that way. Hers is a hard case; they have one boy, about fifteen, and her husband was allowed four shillings for him; the lad got a job at Bishop Auckland, eight and six a week, and of course they stopped his money. The boy has to travel in every day, get his dinner in the town and wear decent clothes. It costs much more than the extra four and six to keep him properly.

'The one thing that keeps me sane is the house and the work that has to be done to keep six children fed and clothed and out of mischief. If I had time on my hands like my husband I should worry myself into a state. He feels he's let me down and that he ought to be able to support his family, and although he knows it's not his fault that he's unemployed, it makes him feel inferior to those fellows who are working even for low wages.

'I don't know which is the biggest anxiety, my husband or the children. He's still under forty but feels that he's no more use. They haven't begun to live yet and if we have to stick on here they'll never know what life can be, but there must be something better than this. Someone said the other day that we oughtn't to have such large families and that it was our own fault if it brought suffering. I should like to ask him how we are to stop it, birth-control appliances cost money and even with them you can't be certain. On our money food must come first.'

Food? Here are the prices and goods displayed in a shop in an area where 50% of the population are unemployed. Margarine at 4d. a pound; streaky bacon at 3½d. a pound; tinned peas at 3½d.; condensed milk at 2d.—'unfit for babies'; tea at 2d. per two ounces; minced meat at 4d. a pound.

Food? Here are the prices of advertised goods in to-day's *Daily Telegraph*. Beef at 1s. 3d. a pound; plaice at 10d. a pound; tomatoes at 1s. 4d. a pound; pears at

2s. 6d. a dozen; a 'sound luncheon wine' at 32s. a dozen.

Food? Here is Sir John Orr in *Food, Health and Income*. 'To make the diet of the poorer groups (40-45 % of the total population) the same as that of the first group whose diet is adequate for full health—those spending over 10s. per week per head on food—would involve increase in consumption of a number of the more expensive foodstuffs, viz., milk, eggs, butter, fruit and vegetables and meat, varying from 12 % to 25 %.'

Finally, Sir George Newman's report that 'No one can be familiar with the conditions of the distressed areas without being aware of the physical, mental and social impairment associated with prolonged unemployment.' The tragedy of to-day is not so much the infliction of poverty and suffering on a large section of the community, but that the power to alter such a condition is vested in the hands of people who can never live in such a state themselves.

Tea-party of middle-class 'Socialists.'

'Indian or China?'

'China, please, I can't touch Indian.'

Shopkeeper in derelict village:

'You see that tea there, I shall never sell it, sixpence a quarter; two ounces for twopence is all that sells in this district.'

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V

'I am a Man of Despair, and am shut up in this Iron Cage.  
I cannot go out.'

*Bunyan.*

ANY attempt to evaluate the psychological effects of unemployment must avoid two major difficulties. In the first place it is important not to abstract the mental conditions from the physical, and man as an individual from man as a member of a social organization. Secondly, there is the danger of 'non-existential' thinking; the tendency to dogmatize on what others are feeling. Great mischief is done in this and other fields by the intellectual, who—so to speak—standing on the bank and reviewing the current of effects in isolated detachment enunciates 'truths' about these events and, worse still, seeks to act upon them. Such intellectual mischief-makers must be pushed off the bank into the stream of events and be silenced until, after a thorough immersion, they can safely be allowed to speak. No man who has not been unemployed in modern industrial conditions, and who has not lived under the economic and physical disabilities involved, can say what such a life must mean. It is sometimes said that the 'unemployed' think this or that, but such a suggestion reveals not only an ignorance of the wide range of different individuals affected but assumes a knowledge which is not possible of their most intimate and secret thoughts. On the other hand certain evidence is available from men and women who have themselves suffered and from close association with them it is possible to draw conclusions which, though they do not pretend to any absolute truth contain sufficient information to reveal the gravity of the situation.



With these reservations constantly in mind it is legitimate to say that unemployment changes the attitude to life of the affected individual. These disintegrating changes may be briefly summarized.

A man when unemployed is perpetually frustrated, there is no outlet for his normal energies. He becomes aware that his life is determined by forces entirely beyond his control. He is compelled to live on an allowance from others. He is driven in upon himself, and, feeling different from others, begins to build his life on the phantasies which spring up in the mind of the bitterly disappointed. At times he feels hatred against society which has reduced him to that state and his desire for revenge struggles with a sense of his personal inability to cope with the situation. Desire and reality are constantly at odds. The drop from the regular wage to benefit or allowance involves worse things than a sudden lowering of the standard of living—which is bad enough. If unemployment be prolonged it means in a great many cases that man's status in his own household is greatly undermined. He is no longer the breadwinner; indeed he may have to go cap in hand to his own children for money wherewith to buy baccy and cigarettes. When this happens the cup of bitterness is full to overflowing. On one occasion I was having tea with a family in which, although the two daughters were at work, the father had been unemployed for over a year. When his wife and I had been served he stretched out his hand to help himself, but was stopped by his wife with the exclamation 'Mary and Doris must choose first, after all they are the bread-winners.' Such a scene trivial though it may appear has its elements of tragedy.

Then there is the loss of social status, not only of the comradeship of the workshop but—irrational though it may be—loss of social position in the neighbourhood.

When clothes become threadbare a man shuns the society of his fellows. The world becomes an alien and a hateful place, he imagines that people are looking at him, despising him, laughing at him. A casual glance from a passer-by is one of contempt. I know a man who tells me that going into a shop makes him sweat with fear. This state is frequently accompanied by a continuous depression, hopelessness, and the necessity of thinking furiously and without cessation on every problem of life. Confidence in himself is weakened and he senses a gradual loss of skill in his trade. 'With these two hands I could turn out more and better boots in a week than anyone,' said a friend of mine to me the other day, and holding them out in front of him he added, 'Of what use is my capital to me now?' Another man who had worked for twenty years with his hands at rough manual labour, but who has been unemployed for over a year, a week after he had regained work said, 'just look at my hands,' showing me the blisters which covered them. 'For twenty years I've worked with them and they have never let me down; now I cannot do the job which I have been used to, my own hands have let me down.'

It is sometimes suggested that the chief need is the restoration of the sense of community service and although few working men would say it and most would be unconscious of it, there is some substance in this suggestion. It is probable that a larger number suffer a loss of self respect without relating it explicitly to inability to serve the community, but I doubt very much whether this feeling is the predominant feeling. The sense of service to the community is not obvious in employment; how could it be when the work of most people is so remote from the ultimate consumer, when the service rendered is so intricate and uncertain? There is no evidence of any marked sense of service to the community in trade dis-

putes; withdrawal of maintenance men from pits would be impossible if it were.

A more probable explanation of the unemployed man's sense of loss is that when he is out of work he is deprived of a normal support and control in the business of living. He is *déraciné*. The life of the wage earner is largely controlled for him by the conditions of his employment, it decides for him when he shall get up and what he shall do when he is up. It has a first claim on his energies and leaves him with a sense of freedom to waste his time if he likes out of hours. Regular employment provides a framework to life, the worker is insulated from the market and from most of the questions of organization involved in giving him employment—it is only when the whole thing breaks down and he finds himself ejected that he has to make up his own mind what he is to do with every minute of the day.

There is also a material social difficulty. Working-class life is carried on in a small house on the assumption that the wage earner will be out of the house for most of the day. When a man is unemployed he has only the street corner or his home, and in the latter he is often made to feel that he is in the way. Friction develops between husband and wife. Feeling that he has been in some way a failure, the man is hypersensitive and his wife in the stress of their difficult existence may make him feel that she considers he has let her down. The effects of the Means Test which compels the family to support those of its numbers who are unemployed imposes a strain on their relationship. No section of the community have been more ready to assist their friends and relatives in distress than the working class, but there is a world of difference between help freely given and assistance which is made compulsory by act of Parliament. It is a strange irony that the institution of the family on which our western

civilization is based, should have been attacked by a government which represents, in the main, people who wish that organization of society to persist. A policy which would have been understandable in the Communists has been adopted by the Capitalists.

It is undoubtedly true that the Unemployment Insurance Acts have ensured a minimum standard of life for unemployed wage earners and their dependants, and that if these acts had not been passed and no allowance had been paid, that there would have been considerably more suffering than there is to-day. The prospect of two million people existing on private charity is inconceivable. But this undoubted benefit should not blind us to the fact that the 'dole' has not proved an unmixed blessing, it has had its evil as well as its good effects. Omitting for the moment the result which it has had upon those unaffected by unemployment, the 'they've got dole, what more do they want,' attitude, it is true to say that in many cases men who have been unemployed for a considerable time are accepting the lower level of life which has been forced upon them as normal. The 'dole' is at any rate secure, it is a more regular and steady wage than many obtain by working in industry. In an area, such as County Durham, where the rate of wages in mining is low, many men receive almost as much—and in some cases more—when they are unemployed as when they are working five shifts a week. This is particularly true of those with large families who receive an allowance from the State on a family basis. Contrast this with the system of industry which does not at the moment recognize that a wage which will support a single man or a childless couple may be inadequate for the support of a large family. Even when the actual money received from the Labour Exchange is less than would have been obtained in ordinary work, there are often additional expenses

which the employed man has to meet and on which the unemployed man may save. The policy of many coal companies and coal owners compels men to travel over considerable distances from their own village to a pit several miles distant, and I have met men whom it costs three or four shillings a week in bus fares to get to their work. Men working need more food, there is greater wear and tear on their clothes and in the mining industry there is the ever present discomfort and potential danger. Superficially it would seem then that if a man is enabled to live on the same economic level whether he is employed or unemployed he would choose the latter. Such is, however, far from being the case and even after prolonged unemployment men will go to any lengths in order to obtain work in the pits however distant.

The tragedy is that very often even when such work is available they are unable to take it. Unemployment has sapped their physical strength and nervous vitality. Long absence from the pit has dulled their skill and decreased their industrial efficiency. They are no longer able to fulfil the standard of work which they had previously attained.

The needs of the unemployed, therefore, over and above the need of actual relief would seem to be in the first place some regular occupation, organized for them just as employment is organized for them, and in the second place an available place to keep them out of the home. In providing such a service several points should be borne in mind. Firstly, that there must be no element of compulsion; if the arrangements made are not sufficiently attractive to encourage men to join as volunteers there will be something wrong with the programme itself. It must satisfy the needs which the men themselves feel and must not be the imposition of some other standard of what people think they ought to need. Secondly, they must be

organized on a democratic basis. Suggestion of dictatorship is abhorrent to the majority of English working men, and when unemployed and conscious of a sense of dependence and a lack of personal freedom they are more likely to react unfavourably to schemes which are imposed on them and governed by those who are not in sympathy with themselves. Thirdly, there must be no question of limiting the activities of such a place to those who are unemployed. One of the effects of unemployment on the individual is to make him feel 'different' and cut off from contact with his fellows. To provide any service which is specifically limited to unemployed people and which debars them from association with their employed friends is to perpetuate one of the very evils which such schemes are intended to prevent. Fourthly, there must be no suggestion that such organizations are providing an alternative life to that of regular employment. Many suggestions have been put forward by well intentioned persons whose purpose is to provide an alternative system of life for those who have been displaced in industry. Such schemes, although they may have been inspired by the best motives and have proved beneficial to the individual concerned, have had an unfortunate effect on the attitude of the workers as a whole to this problem. In the main, they demand a reorganization of the individual's standard of values. He is asked to work for himself or his community on a basis of exchanging commodities and not for wages. He is required to labour for honour and not for gain. While such an alteration of values may be highly desirable it is unfair to imply that they should be adopted only by the unemployed people who, rightly or wrongly, feel that they are being exploited. They believe that there is a rightful place for them in the existing economic system and that all efforts should be made to get them back into the normal running of the machine. It may be

argued that this is not a sound instinct, but I am convinced that it is believed in very deeply. Some people apparently believe that it will be possible to provide the individual unemployed man with a full sense of function outside the economic system and in this respect the public mind has undergone something of a change. Prior to 1930 the emphasis was on the cure of unemployment, while in recent years it had been increasingly placed upon the improvement of the lot of the unemployed. I do not think we should acquiesce in this change in the public mind until two points have been settled; whether the replacement of the unemployed in the economic system can only be achieved at a cost to the rest of the community which is disproportionate to the gain, and, whether we can in fact restore a sense of function to the individual outside the social system of paid labour. In their antipathy to the machine and its alleged effects on individuality and craftsmanship, schemes have been proposed which savour of the policy of Mahatma Gandhi. A recent book which discussed the question of giving the unemployed a sense of function by establishing them on the land was criticized by a reviewer who said, 'I consider the Erewhonian subterfuge of resorting to spade, scythe and sickle as easily the worst of all. It is, in fact, no solution and the existing social order could not survive such a witless confession of failure.'

We are faced with the widely held general assumption that the reabsorption of the unemployed into the economic system does in fact involve such Erewhonian subterfuges as this. Such an assumption needs careful scrutiny before policy can safely be based upon it. The same scrutiny should be given to the correlative assumption that an individual can be given a sense of function independent of the economic system. Economic inquiry cannot say definitely whether either or both assumptions are false or

true. Nor can it dictate to society which of several possible lines of policy based on these assumptions ought to be followed. It can, however, state the alternatives and indicate the probable results of following either line of policy.

Whether the unemployed are to be given a sense of function inside or outside the economic system, certain costs will be incurred—costs not only in the sense of monetary expenditure—but of sacrificing some improvement in the standard of life of the community as a whole. Suppose, for example, that the conclusion was reached that outside the economic system individuals could not retain the full sense of function, it might then become necessary to follow up policies that would enable all occupations to retain the services of persons whose efficiency and other characteristics would have caused them to fall out of the system. Such a policy would have its effect on productivity and upon the standard of life of the whole community. Alternatively, on the assumption that a satisfactory personal life can be provided outside the economic system, a minority would be allowed to drop out and the necessary steps would be taken to give them effective opportunities for self-respecting activity in certain extra-economic areas. The provision of the resources to be used in this way would place a burden upon all those remaining in the economic system, and the success of that system in providing for the community would be to some extent impaired. Before deciding which line of policy to pursue, it is first necessary to test the two assumptions and second, to present the difficulties involved in each line or policy. Only when this has been fairly and squarely done have we any right to advocate policies which are going to have far-reaching effects on the personal lives of individuals and on the life of society as a whole. Economic inquiry is capable of presenting



society with its dilemma. It can state the probable consequences of adopting either of the alternatives, it can urge that the real costs of each line of action and the benefits accruing from them shall be carefully weighed, but it cannot do the choosing; society itself, in the light of the facts, must make its choice.

At the present time, society is not in a position to make its choice. It has not explored the possibility of giving a minority of members a satisfactory life independent of the wages nexus, it has not considered the effects of such a decision upon the attitude to their work of those remaining inside the system. It has not examined the effects of such a plan upon the economy as a whole in the light of the changing age structure of the population, the changing technique of production, the developing social and educational system. It has not fully examined the alternative of directing the development of the economy in such a way as will secure a minimum of unemployment, it rejects such policies instinctively because of the threat they imply to the standard of life of the community.

It may well be the absence of knowledge and discussion on such issues as these that explains the real personal degradation that is associated with unemployment and its relief by cash solatia. The personality of the unemployed man is assaulted because he is the victim of circumstances which society will not face fundamentally. The personal attitude of the individual to measures taken for his relief will depend upon the intellectual consideration with which they are administered. The more these measures are a 'normal' part of the activities of the economic system, the less will be the personal degradation associated with them. Hence the success or failure of schemes for the relief of the unemployed, both from the economic and administrative as well as from the personal point of view, depends upon the extent to which such

schemes have been grafted on to the working of the economic system and upon the deliberate choice of society taken in the knowledge of all the relevant facts.

The type of assistance to be provided and the expenses to which it would be reasonable to go, raise the question of the permanence of the need, and this involves some question of the problem of unemployment as distinct from the case of the unemployed. From this point of view it is probably sufficient to discriminate between three types of unemployment. In the first place occasional unemployment in the life of normal employment; this involves carrying reserves for industry and can be financed by Unemployment Insurance, although there is a case here for expenditure of social and occupational provision to supplement the payment of money allowance. Secondly, the decline of industry which involves industrial but not necessarily geographical transfer to some other occupation and this justifies a larger provision because wastage of labour is larger, and thirdly, the decline of industry which involves geographical transfer; in this case provision would be temporary because it is desirable to discourage immobility, although special provision must be made on a permanent basis for those who are either too old to be transferred or whom it is impossible for other reasons to move.

The need is summarized very clearly by Mr. William Noble, of Maes-Yr-Haf, in his evidence to the Commission on Unemployment: 'The first need of the long unemployed man is the continued fellowship of sympathetic people and contact with associations which are stimulating and encouraging. It is not sufficient to open rooms or comfortable shelters. Neither is it good to make gifts in the form of charity which commands no exchange of service. They need centres where they can build up friendship and exchange ideas with others of like interests

and also meet people who are in sympathy with them. Both from the moral and educational aspects self-government is essential and democratic control of all activities gives scope for many to share in committee experiments. It is important that any schemes that are to depend upon the unpaid labour of the unemployed should be considered by the men themselves and not be wholly thought out for them by outside associations. It is a mistake to think that it is easy to create a willingness to give labour for something called "Community," which to them may be merely a vague term. Self-government is all important. The really reliable intelligent men who now form a majority of our unemployed are not willing to accept the hospitality of a Club which is controlled by an individual whose only claim to superiority is that he is employed.'

It is moreover important to examine our own attitude of mind towards such proposals, or rather—for this is the essence of the matter—our attitude towards the men themselves. Is our attitude relative or absolute? Work has been attempted along the lines suggested since the speech made by the King, then Prince of Wales, at the Albert Hall early in 1932. By what motives have those who have begun this work been actuated? Were they motives of expediency, 'We had better do something for these men or else the Communists will get among them and there will be trouble,' or was it said, 'These men may be wanted again in the Nation's industries; we must keep them fit and alert in mind apparently by means of occupational centres,' or were people just moved by sentiment and sympathy, 'We must get these poor devils off the street and give them a warm place in which to pass the time.' All such methods would indicate a relative treatment of men, of men as workers, as potential agitators, or as members of a class who deserve our charity; it is not to treat men as men with an inalienable claim to a

full life, and that by right and not on sufferance. Moreover our attitude, our motives and our actions in the treatment of our fellow men are of an incalculable importance at this moment in history. In other countries men are observing other ends. In one country the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat,' in another 'The Corporate State,' in yet another 'Blut und Rasse.' These are idols which have been set up in the market place before which every knee must bend. The men in those countries are not ends in themselves, but means to an end and rigorously, remorselessly subordinated to its service.

What motives should inspire our attitude towards this problem in England, to what end is this service which has developed very considerably, but which if it is sound must be developed very much more? Is it for the benefit of the village? The City? The County? The Country? It is possibly all this, but it must be something more, for they are relative only. There must be an 'absolute' standard or the labour will have been in vain. There is only one absolute. God and my neighbour. God in terms of my neighbour and my neighbour in terms of God. In these circumstances a relative treatment of my neighbour will not suffice. My neighbour by right of inheritance and by birthright acquires an absolute value and to place him under conditions where he cannot fulfil his destiny is to sin against him.

As I have said, the attempt to deal with the effects of unemployment is only part, and a small part, of the problem, but this restricted task must be performed with all the efficiency and enthusiasm which can be brought to it. It must be remembered that man cannot live by bread alone, nor by 'dole,' nor even adequate 'dole,' nor the occupation centre, no matter how well equipped and managed, nor even for that matter a full day's work

and a full day's wages will suffice. Unless and until these men—and all men—can be set under conditions in which they can, if they choose, attain the full measure of their capacities as citizens of the two Kingdoms, our society will be imperfect. If it is asked why should this work be undertaken then the answer is that it is being done to bring about conditions of that kind. It is not necessary to trouble as to its ultimate result for it will be set in the right direction.

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VI

TWO MEN'S DIARIES

I

**M**ONDAY.—I got up about eight o'clock, had a cup of tea and went for a stroll down to the paper-shop at the corner where I read the posters. They were all about Abyssinia and said that the Italians were in Addis Ababa and that there was looting. I looked down the street and wondered what would be looted in our village, a few wireless sets and a gas meter or two! Then I went back and washed up the plates the kids had used for their breakfast. After that I went out again and met a neighbour, we talked a bit about the weather and the election of a local councillor, which was held the week before. Then I got out my cycle and went off with a friend to pick coals off a tip. It took us till one o'clock to get a sackful and I got home about two.

I had some dinner, bread and dripping, and tea and a bit of black pudding, then I sat down and read a book from the County Library. About five I went out again to escape from the kids who were home from school and all over the house. I met another neighbour and talked about football and the rumour that the colliery were going to close another seam. We bought an evening paper between us and read it. Then I went home again and the wife asked me to step up the road to the fried-fish van. I bought the fish and potatoes, came back and helped put the boys to bed. Then I sat and talked to my wife for a bit and went to bed.

*Tuesday.*—Walked into Auckland to sign on at the Exchange, this took all morning and I wasn't back until

half-past one. We had stew for dinner and after that I went out for a walk and met a friend. We talked about the colliery and discussed the report that the owners were going to close a seam because of the extra sixpence a shift. It began to rain so I went home and finished my library book. My wife was expecting and I began to make a cradle out of a sugar box, but I'd no proper tools and didn't make a good job of it. I went to bed early.

*Wednesday.*—Mucked about most of the morning, cleared up the privy and wrote a letter to my brother in Canada. Stood at the end of the street most of the afternoon, talked about the Gresford Mine Disaster and Cripp's speech. Went to a Co-operative meeting in the evening.

*Thursday.*—Walked to and stood about in Auckland, came back in the afternoon and did a bit of gardening. Nothing in the house to eat in the evening except bread and tea.

*Friday.*—Dole day. Good dinner, pigs' trotters and peas, went to the cinema in the afternoon and stayed till after seven.

*Saturday.*—Rained all day. Stayed indoors and read the *Herald*, every damned word of it, adverts and all.

*Sunday.*—Still raining. Mended my boots with soles bought at Woolworths, cleared a bit in the evening and took the wife for a walk. It's been a pretty normal week and not much different from any during the last year. I ought to read more but I can't concentrate, my thoughts keep on coming back to my own troubles. I read a few pages and then decided to go for a walk, after I've gone about a mile I think it's a waste of time and come back and think of all the things I'd do if I had a job. But that doesn't help much. Sometimes I get into a physical fever with worry and waiting and dread that something, God knows what, worse will happen to us.

## II

I'm an unemployed pitman, I've been out for three years and see little chance of getting a job again. As I say, I'm 'unemployed'—that means I don't work for wages and I live on the dole. It doesn't mean I've nothing to do, far from it, I'm so busy that I envy the chaps who have leisure after their shift is over. Here's the account of how I spent last week.

*Monday.*—Up at six o'clock and down to the Poultry Centre where I worked on the new crees (hen-houses) till about eight. Back home for a cup of tea and then back to the allotment where I spent the morning getting the cabbage plants set out and the early potatoes in. In the afternoon went down to the Service Club, of which I'm Secretary, and dealt with correspondence, drew up notices and made arrangements for the lecture on Tuesday night. In the evening I went into Durham to attend a Conference of Secretaries.

*Tuesday.*—Worked all morning at the Poultry Centre, in the afternoon attended Cricket Club committee and arranged for volunteers to assist in repairing the fences. In the evening attended the Centre for a lecture on the History of Durham, and proposed a vote of thanks to the lecturer.

*Wednesday.*—Signed on at the Exchange and spent the afternoon at a Poultry Centre Committee and afterwards went to the Centre to check up the tool-store with the member responsible. A meeting of the Club choir in the evening which I find very interesting.

*Thursday.*—Met a representative of the Community Council to talk over the chance of getting a Physical Training class going in the Club. Took him down to the Poultry Centre and showed him the new chicks. Dealt with club correspondence. In the afternoon helped with a party who were painting the fence round



the Cricket ground. Stayed indoors during the evening because my wife says she never sees me!

*Friday.*—Drew my money from the Exchange, spent the afternoon in the Centre mending my kids' shoes and tried my luck at hand-sewing. Broke three awls but found it much more of a job than nailing the soles on. Club committee meeting in the evening.

*Saturday.*—Spent the whole day at the Poultry Centre, part of the time on my own plot and part with three other members putting rabbit wire round the holding. Took the kids for a walk in the evening and then wrote up the Minutes of the Club Executive and did correspondence.

*Sunday.*—Attended the Adult School in the morning and spent the afternoon reading the Sunday paper. Took the wife for a walk before tea and had to go to a special committee meeting of the Cricket Club in the evening.

Before I got these things to do I was going to pieces, I felt I was on the scrap-heap, but now I know I've something to do all day that's worth doing—almost too much, in fact. Someone asked me the other day if all this didn't make me content to stay 'unemployed,' but I told him that it had made me think quite a lot on what is meant by 'work' and 'out of work.' It had made me see that there was more to life than slaving seven hours underground day in day out, that what is needed are opportunities for all men to work under decent conditions and to have sufficient leisure, sufficient security and enough money to lead a self-respecting life. I've always belonged to the Labour Party, but before I was unemployed I never thought much about politics. I'm still a member of the party but a more useful member. I'm learning something about economics, I'm seeing at first hand what effect unemployment, the Means Test and so on is having on the minds and bodies of my friends. The different responsi-

bilities I've got make me see that government isn't so easy as it looks, you've so many different people to consider and you'll never satisfy them all. I feel I'm as good as anyone else now. I want my place in society, not only as a worker but as a man.

## VII

‘ They gave their bodies to the Commonwealth and received  
. . . .

*Thucydides.*

**W**E stood on the edge of the allotment looking down towards the valley and the village of grey cottages. It was a good day for digging; the wind dried the sweat on the man's back, but the sun shone and the showers of the morning had made the earth easier to the spade. The miner had not worked below ground for three years, and although the quarter acre provided occupation, his hands were soft and he dug without rhythm, furiously and swiftly, stopping after every three or four minutes to scrape the mould off his boots. I noticed a blue weal some five inches long running from the palm of his hand well above the wrist, and rather to make conversation than from real interest asked if it was a recent hurt. He turned with a smiling denial. . . .

Towards noon March 28th, 1918, Mr. George Wilson, by profession a coal hewer, of Craghead in the County of Durham, was seated in the shelter of an abandoned eighteen pounder on the outskirts of Harbonnières which lies between Vaubillers and Bayonmuillers, some eight kilometres south of the point where the Ancre joins the Somme. The 50th Division were officially in support but on that day all distinctions of battle zone and forward zone—support and reserve—had disappeared; infantry brigades had been reduced to the strength of a battalion and the line in which all ranks and units were intermingled retired, counter attacked and—outnumbered by five to one—again retired.

At about three o'clock the remainder of his battalion which numbered just over 100 men advanced in one of the



'A LAND FIT FOR HEROES'

*To face page 64*



desperate counter attacks which were a feature of that battle, and two hours later Mr. Wilson found himself in a shell-crater inhabited by a decomposing mule, pools of liquid mud, a freshly killed corporal of the Northumberland Fusiliers and a very large and active German private soldier. His climb into the crater had been deliberate, and encumbered as he was with some sixty pounds of equipment, he had slung his rifle over his shoulder in order to have the use of his hands for the descent. Scarcely had he reached the bottom when the German drove at him with his bayonet, and having no time to unsling his rifle and adopt any formal posture of defence, he pulled the butt across his stomach and his opponent's bayonet nailed his hand very neatly to the wood. The next move lay with the aggressor, and would undoubtedly have been fatal to Mr. Wilson had not a Mr. Mason of the West Yorkshires—as I have said the units were somewhat mixed in that sector—appeared on the edge of the crater and judiciously shot the German through the head. This incident ended his war service, he lost a considerable quantity of blood, contracted pneumonia through lying in the shell hole for the rest of the night and gained the D.C.M. for bringing back Mr. Mason single handed, the latter with a gap in his helmet as big as his fist and some fifteen bullet wounds in his body. . . .

'I was nineteen then, and until I joined the Army I never left this district. I worked in the pit as a lad until I was old enough to join up and was only in France six months. Since the war I have been out of this village about a dozen times. I have been to Durham and once to Newcastle. In the last five years I have had six months' work, and then I earned less than I got on the dole. Sometimes it gets me down, day after day just the same, weekdays and Sundays and bank holidays all the same. Nothing to look forward to, but I go on hoping that some-

thing will turn up. The war was different, life was worth living even though you did not know whether each day was your last. I don't care now whether any day is the last.'

I asked him if he would go again.

'I don't know, war is horrible and a waste, but you get something to do and usually enough to eat, and you have friends with you and you feel you are of some use—but you're a bloody fool really, because they don't really want you, and they don't really think you're a hero or they would not let you go on the scrap heap when it's all over. Look at me, one of the poor b——s who made the world safe for democracy, what has it done for me?'

'Do you really want to go down the pit again?'

'That is another thing I am not quite clear about; at first I was lost, every day I saw others going off on their shifts and then I thought I was lucky. Why should you sweat seven hours underground for 35s. a week, when you can be a gentleman of leisure on top for a bob or two less. After a bit I changed my mind. Anything was better than hanging about doing nothing, and I'd have worked for any wage. I began to feel that I was different and that there must be something wrong with me. Why didn't I get a job, I was as good as the others?'

'What do you think about it now?'

'I have changed again lately, I suppose the allotment and the Club have done it. I get up in the morning and think of all the things I have to do here and the job I have got down at the Centre and it will take a lot for me to go down the pit again for that wage. After all, what is life for me and dozens like me? We work for the weekly wage, which gives us just enough to go on with until the next one. We work all our lives until we are too old and then we live on our children and the old age pension. But there is something about regular work that is different,

you are earning your money and not dependent; your kids don't see you standing in the dole queue and all this,' he waved his arm round the allotment, 'all this is good, but it isn't the same, God knows what it's all about. I don't.'

Mr. George Wilson, coal hewer, of Craghead, in the County of Durham, some time soldier in the county regiment, unemployed for the duration, wiped the earth off his hands and looked across the valley, 'It is clear that it was only when I was asked to kill or be killed that I had a chance to live.'



## VIII

‘The Owner of the Pit shall make it good.’

Exodus xxi, 34.

**I**N April 1934 the Government appointed Investigators to examine and report on the conditions obtaining in certain parts of England, Scotland and Wales which had suffered acutely from long-term industrial depression. One of these areas included the Durham coalfields, whose position was examined and described in detail by Captain Euan Wallace; his report was presented to the Minister of Labour at the end of July and on December 21st, the Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Bill received the Royal Assent.

The Act provided for the appointment of two Commissioners, one for the depressed areas of England and Wales; one for those of Scotland, whose purpose was to be ‘The initiation, organization, prosecution and assistance of measures designed to facilitate the economic development and social improvement’ of the areas covered by the investigations made earlier in the year.

In the House of Commons, on November 14th, the Chancellor of the Exchequer informed the members that: ‘Although in the present case we need not describe the disease as desperate, it certainly is sufficiently exceptional to warrant exceptional treatment. What we want here, as it seems to us, is something more rapid, more direct, less orthodox if you like, than the ordinary plan, and if we are to do what seems to me even more important than the improvement of the physical condition, if we are to effect the spiritual regeneration of these areas, and if we are to inspire their people with a new interest in life and a new hope for the future, we have to convince them that these reports are not going to gather dust in some remote pigeon

hole but that they will be the subject of continuous executive action. . . .

‘We have resolved to cut through all the ordinary methods and adopt a plan which we conceive is more suitable to these special conditions than the methods which, in the ordinary course, would be applied to such a problem. . . .

‘We are going to give the Commissioners a very wide discretion. They must not be afraid of trying experiments even if these experiments fail.’

Similar views were expressed by other prominent Government spokesmen, including the Prime Minister (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald) who said on November 20th: ‘Who is going to say how much is going to be required? It would have been sheer folly for us to have said £20,000,000, £50,000,000 or £100,000,000. This is not the way to do it. It is an unbusinesslike way to solve this question because we desire to get some real solution, and not merely a stopgap solution. An unbusinesslike way was to give those big sums. The businesslike was to say “I mention a sum which I put at your disposal. It will be sufficiently big for you to feel confident that you are going to get what is necessary. The ground has been surveyed. The problem is now clear. You go down. You face it. You deal with it. You spend money on it, and I will stand by you.” That is the position roughly and generally of the Government.’

From this Act and from such definite indications that the Government were aware of the need for drastic action, a few optimists believed that the problem was at last to be tackled in earnest. It was no new question and the information obtained by the Investigators had long been available had there been any intention to deal with the fundamental economic dislocation of the districts affected. But now there was to be an end of palliatives and respect

for traditional procedure; a desperate situation demanded definite action, and in the words of the Paymaster-General, 'The first striking point in the proposals in the Bill is that the Commissioners have wide powers which they can freely exercise.'

Closer examination of the Bill would have shown that this flourishing of trumpets betokened no change in the traditional policy of the Government and would have hastened the eventual disillusion. Given the economic and social condition described in the earlier pages of this book and entrusted with the responsibility of improving the situation, the Commissioner found that his powers were, in fact, so restricted that it was impossible to do more than 'first-aid' work and that on a limited scale.

In the first place he is under the general control of the Minister of Labour and subject to as much orthodox financial control as any Government Department. In his own words, 'Whilst they may not actually hamper the freedom and initiative of the Commissioner so far as making proposals is concerned, they do result in restricting his powers to carry these proposals into effect.'

In the second place he is unable to supplement a specific grant made or offered by a Government Department. 'If, for instance, the Minister of Transport thinks that he is justified on account of traffic needs in offering a local authority a 60% grant towards making a new road, and the authority cannot afford to find the remaining 40%, the Commissioner is unable to offer to bear any of the local authority's portion, even though the road would in his opinion lead to the economic development of the area.'

Thirdly, the Commissioner cannot give financial assistance towards the establishment of new industries working for profit—in other words, for any industries whose

purpose is commercial and which may be expected to absorb any appreciable number of employees.

Fourthly, although the problem of transferring of labour is an integral part of any scheme for the reconstruction of these areas and although it is generally agreed that the provision of accommodation either in houses or hostels is essential if such schemes are to succeed, the Commissioner is debarred from financing or assisting any attempts to deal with this cardinal pre-requisite to an adequate policy of transference.

The most obvious needs of County Durham fall outside the scope and function of the Commissioner. The re-organization of the Coal Industry, the direction of new Industries to the county and a large-scale plan to transfer surplus labour are not within his province. The first is, of course, a matter for the Government as a whole, and with regard to the second, the Commissioner circulated some 5,829 firms asking them the reasons which had deterred them from establishing new factories in the Special Areas and requesting information which might assist the formation of an industrial policy. Of the 5,829 firms, 4,066 did not reply, and of the remainder 75% were not prepared to contemplate the development of their business in those districts. Such a response is symptomatic of a general condition; it is unlikely that private enterprise will regard the establishment of new industries on anything but commercial grounds, and Durham's need for work is not purely economic but social and even spiritual. Under our existing economic arrangements manufacturers must be enticed, they cannot be compelled on the plea of national rather than sectional interests. Enticement is not likely to be successful and compulsion arouses the power and majesty of vested interest, irresponsible individualism and plain selfish greed. Plan for one district, they fear, and the next step will be national

planning, state control of industry, socialism and anarchy. If the capitalist organization cannot plan its industry so that the general well-being of the nation is not subordinated to minority interests, then some other organization must be given the opportunity. The Special Areas are a national responsibility, in the national interest they must be reclaimed from the Slough of Despond and other considerations ruthlessly shelved.

The Commissioner, in good faith, sends out a moderate appeal for assistance to the industrialists and is treated with what at the best is lack of courtesy and at the worst, insufferable contempt.

Within his restricted powers and during the eighteen months since his appointment a fair measure of palliatives have been administered. In Durham a dozen local authorities have been assisted in Public Works, essential in themselves but providing only temporary employment. Under 200 men have been transferred to Land Settlement schemes in the South at a cost to date of over £1,000 per family. A million and a quarter has been spent on Health Services in all the Special Areas of England and Wales and £250,000 on Social Services, of which £175,000 was expended on Holiday Camps for school children.

The money spent has, in one way or another, affected the lives of a considerable number of the inhabitants of the area. It has improved the amenities of town and village and maintained the morale of men suffering from long-term unemployment, but it has not had one iota of effect on the root causes of the economic distress and it is fantastic to expect that with such restricted powers the Commissioner can do more than apply temporary first-aid to the sufferers.

Possibly the realization that the economic ills of the Special Areas cannot be cured without some measure of reorganization for industry as a whole, and without an

alternative relationship of the State to private enterprise, 'sicklies o'er with the pale cast of thought' the 'enterprise of great pith and moment' which our legislators are aware to be the only cure.

In spite of talk about the Depressed Areas there is very little evidence in the Budget or in the Statute Book of attention to their needs. As I have said, the Commissioner is unable to give financial assistance to any undertaking carried on for profit, except land settlement, but if the older industries are permanently contracted the only hope for Durham lies in new industries and new developments. Under the present system new industries can only be developed by private enterprise; the population cannot live by taking in each other's public works.

The clearest evidence of neglect of the Special Areas is the contrast afforded by the Government's attitude to agriculture. There statutory powers have been acquired to control recalcitrant minorities through the medium of the Agricultural Marketing Acts but similar powers are denied the depressed industries. Farmers receive subsidies when they make losses, not so the depressed coal and steel. The difficulties of the coal-mining industry could be remedied on the same basis as the wheat-growing industry and the proposed bacon and beef schemes by re-allocating the import duties on competing fuels and diverting the forty millions raised by these duties to the coal-mining industry. It would be perfectly easy to establish new industries in Durham on the same terms as the beet-sugar industry—£1,400 initial expenditure and £90 per annum perpetual subsidy per worker given employment!

The contrast is the more striking when the comparative efficiency of agriculture is considered; it has proved itself incapable of meeting foreign competition on its own doorstep and it has always paid, as it pays now,

the lowest wages of any important industry. Subsidies to agriculture would seem to be a likely charge on the Exchequer or the consumer for an indefinite period. It cannot be argued that agriculture is any more an essential national service than coal and steel and cotton.

It is not necessary for this argument to suggest that the agricultural policy in itself is bad or that the Government has done nothing for the depressed areas. All that is needed is to point to the contrast between the agricultural policy of the last two Governments and their actual treatment of the needs of the Depressed Areas. But the agricultural policy has a substantive as well as an illustrative importance. Dr. Venn in his presidential address to the agriculture section of the British Association estimated the total of the Government's special contribution to agriculture at £33,750,000 a year. In addition it is claimed that the Government's policy has raised agricultural prices in this country by 13% or the equivalent of another £26 million a year. This gives a total of £60 million a year (about equivalent to the total wages bill of agriculture) which is being directed by Government action to agriculture. Now the Depressed Areas are dependent on the growth of new industries. Whatever difficulties there may be in planting new industries, there can be no doubt that their rate of growth must be slowed down if the Government regularly diverts £60 million a year (the equivalent of the total value of the output of shipbuilding in 1930 and half as much again as the total value of the output of the boot and shoe industry in 1933) of the taxpayers' and consumers' income to the maintenance or development of agriculture.

The conclusion to which these considerations point is that the Depressed Areas have not had the consideration from the post-war Governments which they might reasonably have expected. This conclusion may be wrong, and

the absence of more specific measures to relieve them may be explained by the intrinsic difficulty of discovering and applying such measures; in the case of exhausted coal and iron fields, no Government can do anything except provide relief. But if no specific measures are available all the more important is the reaction upon these Areas of the general economic policy of the Government; in which case the Depressed Areas can urge two claims:

(a) That the policy of protection and quotas, whilst it has proved helpful in the depression, must, in the long run, accelerate the decline of the older export industries by reducing the ability of foreigners to buy their products; and for this the Depressed Areas are entitled to some sort of compensation, and:

(b) that the diversion of sixty millions a year from the new industries, to which a part of it would otherwise naturally flow, must slow down the growth of the new developments which in the last resort is the only economic cure of their difficulties.

The inquiry conducted by the Board of Trade into the Depressed Areas showed that in some of them at any rate (e.g., South-East Lancashire) the rate of growth of the new and expanding industries was greater than in the country as a whole; so that the possibilities of this cure are not remote.

If, however, the policy of subsidies and special legislation is to be continued, it is difficult to confine it to the encouragement of an industry like agriculture which pays the lowest wages in the country, and to refuse its benefits to industries which have paid good wages and on their past record must be regarded as having greater potentialities.

It is some distance from Jarrow to Whitehall and the gap is not merely one of miles but of understanding. Mr. Lloyd George suggested recently that the Cabinet should meet to discuss the Depressed Areas, not in Downing



Street, but amid the dereliction of Palmer's Yard. If they met, or even visited Billy Row, Chilton Buildings, Sunnybrow, Toft Hill, Witton Park, Binchester Blocks, Spennymoor, Birtley, Page Bank, Byers Green, Fir Tree or Leasingthorne and witnessed the dereliction, they might be emboldened to a more forthright policy.

Within their powers the Government Departments are doing all they can, the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Board of Education, together with their equivalent departments on the local authorities. Juveniles are given occupation in Instructional Centres, girls are trained for domestic service, men are assisted with their fares to work when it is available in the South. In 1935 some 21,620 persons left the Special Areas of England and Wales through the medium of the Labour Exchanges, although no figures are available of the number who returned. Throughout the country the officials of the Ministry of Labour and the Unemployment Assistance Board have acted, and are acting, with sympathy and understanding. In daily contact with the men affected and aware, as no other section of the community is aware, of the conditions under which life is supported in the homes of the unemployed, they have gained the respect and regard of thousands who consider them not merely as officials responsible for assessing need and paying out 'the dole' but as friends and counsellors in time of adversity. Many of them give much more than their working day to the cause of helping to make 'worklessness' less intolerable and are to be found taking a prominent part—as private individuals—in the social service movement in the county.

And here, although it is not strictly relevant, I should like to pay tribute to the hundreds of professional men and women, doctors, priests, ministers, schoolmasters and local government officials whose daily work is the more arduous

under the economic conditions obtaining in their districts but who are giving by advice, encouragement and personal service a good measure of assistance to the folk among whom they live. The strain of living in a Special Area is not limited solely to those suffering from unemployment. No 'dole,' no Public Assistance, no training centres, no land settlement, no allotments, no social service, no distribution of clothes and boots will remedy a situation that requires more fundamental action. Excellent in themselves they do but scratch at the surface of the problem and indeed do harm if they obscure the root causes of the trouble. The men of Durham deserve better things. They do not appeal for charity or for pity but for what they consider their inalienable right to work and by working to preserve their independence, their self-respect and their function in the community.

'They've got the dole' has satisfied many an individual conscience and though the 'dole' has undoubtedly saved families from starvation, its blessings should be considered with circumspection. It has resulted in the demoralization of Governments who, having provided relief, have forgotten about the future needs of Depressed Areas. It has probably checked the process of spontaneous adjustment to economic change that would have taken place had no such relief been available. I have met many men who have accepted the lower standard of living on the 'dole' with some measure of security rather than risk the unknown dangers of moving to another part of the country, where they might find themselves unemployed and at a distance from their friends and relations. Reluctance to perform 'task' or 'test' work has been cited as an indication that the unemployed man is content with idleness. Such a theory is based on a misunderstanding of the motives which inspire men's need for work. It is not the

work itself which necessarily attracts, coal-mining is scarcely a hobby, but the resultant sense of function, freedom and the increased standard of living which is secured. Test work is, rightly or wrongly, considered degrading and useless.

The Political Scientists may argue about the 'rights' the citizen possesses, or should possess, may advance opinions for and against the suggestion that the State's function is to provide paid work in industry or an adequate alternative, but I find it difficult to believe that in a properly ordered social and economic system so many thousands should be condemned to live in idleness of mind and body, losing their industrial efficiency, supported on doles and spiritually disintegrating. It is not possible for private enterprise or private charity to remedy such conditions, the responsibility rests with the State in whose power the necessary action lies.

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## IX

‘So he gave him his hand, and he drew him out and set him upon sound ground.’

*Bunyan.*

**D**URING the last three years and more especially during the last eighteen months what are known as Social Service Clubs have grown up in those parts of Durham County in which the incidence of unemployment is particularly heavy. Their membership, which totals upwards of twelve thousand, is not restricted to unemployed men and women, for that would be to perpetuate the false distinction of social values, the sense of inferiority of the workless, which the Club is intended to overcome. The sixty centres conform to no standard pattern, they have developed in accordance with local tradition and reflect in their activities the varying needs of the different districts. For the most part they are democratic institutions governed by their members and subject to no exterior control, they are jealous of their successes and exhibit a healthy rivalry to similar organizations in neighbouring villages.

The programme differs from club to club but certain points are common to all; handicrafts, physical recreation, organized athletics, choirs, lecture courses, Workers' Educational Association classes, drama groups, allotments and discussion groups are to be found in the majority, and many have engaged on voluntary labour schemes for the improvement of their villages. In this work and indeed throughout the range of activities an important principle is respected, no work must be sold and thus displace labour already employed and labour for the benefit of others must not be performed if it would otherwise be done by paid labour. In some ways this is a hard doctrine, but the

members maintain that it is small help to their friends who are employed, if they, through the organized action of the club, add to the numbers signing on at the Exchange. The Club's purpose is not to produce a supply of semi-skilled workers who will compete for lower wages in the labour market, nor is it intended that by expressing themselves in craftwork, drama and debate men will become contented with their position and less active in their demands for industrial employment. A man is not 'doped' by taking advantage of his opportunities for education—and my liberal definition of that much abused word would be the appreciation of and participation in a more significant and abundant life—he is rather 'doped' who stands at street corners day after day, month after month, even year after year, becoming less physically, mentally and morally efficient with each succeeding week. Briefly, their purpose is to enable men to use their enforced idleness in a fashion that will be of some profit to themselves and their community. They are not intended as an alternative to normal industrial employment but are planned so that men may maintain their morale and self-respect against the day when they can once more take their place in industry. Moreover, if there are to be political and social changes of some magnitude during the next decade, each citizen should be equipped to play his part; if democracy is to survive the pressure of world-forces it must be an intelligent democracy in which the individual is free to make decisions on his own responsibility and not on a reflex action to the political demagogue who shouts the loudest. The man who has been workless for several years and whose bitterness has changed to apathy and despair, is out of condition politically as well as physically and psychologically. He has been promised so much for so long and has seen little factual content to the bold policies advocated by politi-

cians of all parties. If the Club is to fulfil its function it must be political, not ranged on the side of any particular persuasion, but a place in which men and women may become politically educated about the problems from whose indirect effects they have personally suffered.

The craftwork in the club programme has a twofold purpose. By enabling men to make and repair their furniture and to mend their own and their children's boots it obviously assists the meagre allowance to go further, but its major purpose is not utilitarian. The craftsman who conceives, designs, executes and uses what he has created is under modern industrial conditions as rare as the Dodo; the modern factory operative bears the same relation to the designer as the chisel to the sculptor; he is a 'hand,' and hand without mind, a tool which performs a function either efficiently or inefficiently and which is discarded by the factory manager in the way a sculptor would destroy a faulty chisel. He is as Eric Gill has said 'reduced to a sub-human condition of intellectual irresponsibility. . . . Our talents are different, but we are all *men*; and to deprive men of responsibility is not simply to be kind to them; it is to deprive them of humanity to make them less than men; to make them sub-human, to reduce them to the level of other animals and even to the level of vegetables.'

The facilities for handicrafts available in the social service clubs are provided in order that men may have the opportunities to express their innate craftsman's instinct and by in some way satisfying it retain their self-confidence. I have met men who were so downhearted that they dare not tackle a simple piece of woodwork and who tell me they gained more satisfaction from successfully overcoming that dread than from any other work in their previous experience. It is possible that from such simple beginnings wider interests will develop. From working—drawings to design, from design to contemporary and historical

comparisons, from furniture to architecture and from architecture to the study of the men who planned and built in other ages. I have known men who, if asked whether they would attend a lecture on the medieval city State would have thought the questioner unhinged, by progressing from handicraft to design, and from design to the history of design, eventually become active members of a group studying what twelve months before they would have considered not only far above their heads but of little interest. It is a strange irony that only when men have been dispossessed from their place in industry and become unemployed have they obtained the opportunity to discover their creative capabilities.

Although the general principle of local autonomy and financial responsibility is fundamental to the movement, it is not possible for the clubs to fulfil their proper functions without advice, instruction and assistance from outside their own district. The two former are provided by the Community Service Council for County Durham, an organization inspired by the National Council of Social Service, whose province is to assist the development of clubs by enabling them to make use of the services of technical experts in a wide range of activities, by providing leadership in those places from which the natural leaders have departed and by acting as a central organization through which experience gained in one district may be imparted throughout the county. The Council works in close co-operation with the individual club committees, with the statutory authorities, local and national, and acts as a liaison between the voluntary organizations in the county whose work is towards the social and educational improvement of both juveniles and adults.

During the last eighteen months over £2,000 has been contributed to the clubs by unemployed men and their wives in the form of subscriptions, and double this figure

in payment for handicraft materials and other benefits; but to keep the clubs going, and to provide them with the essential services costs more than the district can itself collect. Valuable help has come from other parts of the country, from individuals and even more from organized groups. Through the National Council of Social Service, the Ministry of Labour and the Commissioner for Special Areas have made substantial and generous grants in aid both for the capital expenditure on materials to build and equip the club premises and to provide the services of advisers and instructors.

The most interesting and perhaps ultimately the most significant help has come from what has been rather unfortunately termed 'adoptions,' unfortunate because the associations of the word reflect on the spirit of independence, the sturdy self-respect of the Durham miner. But the nomenclature is of little importance, the fact that organized groups in the South have voluntarily come to the aid of the North to the tune of many thousands of pounds, and an inestimable quantity of personal service and goodwill is, I think, the most striking factor in the whole situation.

Counties, towns, villages, staffs of government and other offices have taken a special interest in some village or group of villages in Durham, have sent money, clothing, equipment and, most valuable of all, relationships, and have come to see Durham and the men and women of the pit villages for themselves. It is not too much to say that the contacts made have been fruitful not only to the individuals concerned but to the whole community in which they live. No longer does the South countryman regard the miner in the words of an eighteenth-century writer as 'a rude, bold savage, apparently cut off from his fellow-men in his interests and feelings,' or to quote a more recent author, 'a wild, drunken fellow with a whippet dog at his heels; a man who is a "hero" in a pit disaster and



a coarse brute at all other times; a mischief-maker, always on strike and against authority.' He has found that they are, in fact, men very like himself, of 'like passions' if with different traditions peculiar to their locality and labour. In assisting with the palliative measures the southerner has become aware of the economic and political causes of the distress, the radical problem which requires solution. He returns from a visit to the derelict areas determined that having seen with his eyes the living tragedy, others shall join with him in demanding that such conditions can no longer be tolerated. The help has come not only from the affluent but also from the poor, even from children in elementary schools, men and women whose earnings are not large but who have security of tenure and a reasonable livelihood, lending a hand to their fellows who possess neither work nor security. Not the condescension of a propertied class to the 'afflicted poor' but the free association of free men in the spirit of neighbours to their mutual advantage. From a chain so forged, its links strengthened by the understanding of common manhood, common nationality and identity of interest, much may be expected. The ultimate prosperity of the country depends on a balanced and national development of industry, the factories on the Great West Road are no substitute for decaying furnaces in the North. But the 'adoptions' have shown that there is more to it than the mere unity of economic interest, that at the end of the day it is men rather than the machines who will make a better England, that the 'Geordie' and the 'Cockney' are of one mind in this matter and their differences of habit, social tradition and environment are as nothing when their common manhood is the test.

The Surrey Appeal for Jarrow and the Hertfordshire Appeal for Durham County are notable examples of this

work; the latter owed its inspiration to the then High Sheriff of the county, Captain Humphrey Haslam, who 'came to the conclusion that the undeserved poverty, due to the long term unemployment in County Durham, called for new ways of national service, wherein voluntary efforts must supplement, and continue to supplement, Government measures of relief.' After many personal visits to the district and assisted by a group of enthusiasts, he issued his Appeal and from all over the county, men, women and children responded to the call; within a few months some £17,000 was collected and devoted to urgent remedial measures. Eleven clubs were formed, capital cost from Hertfordshire, voluntary labour from Durham, six poultry and allotment centres were financed and put under the direction of the County Council Agricultural Committee, Boys' Clubs, gardens, training schemes, all received assistance, but of equal worth was the knowledge of Durham's problems which, through this appeal, spread throughout more prosperous Hertfordshire. But there are many more counties as prosperous as Surrey and Hertfordshire and it needs little imagination to foretell the effect on South Wales, Tyneside and Durham if Dorset, Hampshire, Berkshire, Buckingham, Kent, Essex, Wiltshire and Somerset—to name only a few—responded in like measure. The economic situation demands national action, so, too, do the essential palliatives until the root troubles are attacked.

Sevenoaks, Ruislip, Coulsdon and Purley are playing their part, and of especial interest is the help which has come from the staffs of government offices. In these, typists, clerks, commissionaires, heads of departments and Under-secretaries have accepted a voluntary deduction ranging from pennies to pounds on their monthly salaries and sent it North to clubs in County Durham. The Home Office, Patent Office, Ministries of Agriculture, Health

and Labour, the Exchequer and Audit, Crown Agents, Post Office, Board of Education and Office of Works have undertaken this truly admirable task. Representatives of their committees have visited Durham and seen conditions for themselves, they have given freely not only of their money but of themselves. In a future that is gloomy and gives little ground for optimism, these efforts lead us to hope that our plight is not unnoticed and that we are not forsaken. They may not accomplish more than to maintain hope when despair threatens, to prevent decay of mind and body by giving opportunities for self-expression and self-respect, but these are as much necessities as food and heat and eventual work itself. The example of those who have already helped should be an inspiration to those who have not; every scheme could be multiplied a hundredfold, for the need is great and each month of idleness increases the gravity of the situation and the difficulties of its eventual solution.

An invaluable asset to the club movement in County Durham has been the possibility of special instruction furnished by the Residential Centre at Hardwick Hall. The clubs are encouraged to send two or three of their members to Hardwick for a three weeks' course; and arrangements are made whereby the unemployed man does not suffer any pecuniary loss. The aim of the course is to enable the club members on returning home to pass on what they have learnt and so supplement the work of the technical Instructors of the Community Council.

Hardwick Hall was opened as a Residential Centre for members of Service Clubs in County Durham and the North-East coast in October 1934. For three months prior to that date, the work of cleaning, preparing and adapting the house and gardens (unoccupied for thirteen years) had been carried out by unemployed men and such members of the staff as had been appointed.

Through the long years of disuse the house and grounds had suffered and ingenuity and ability were taxed to meet the daily problems of converting a private house into a residential centre with workshops, dormitories, lecture rooms and a dining-hall adequate for forty residents. This work done and the house ready, the recruiting of students became the next problem, and this proved exceedingly difficult—members of the clubs were suspicious of the motive for asking them to go into residence for three weeks—was it a slave camp?—was it a dodge to get men to work for nothing?—these, and similar questions were always asked and even an unreserved reassurance was suspected.

The idea of a 'residential centre' was new to most members of the clubs and had to be very carefully tested and approved before it could be accepted—as the first hardy spirits returned they were closely questioned as to programme, food, discipline, etc. Since then a very steady progress has been maintained and Hardwick is now accepted as an integral part of the club movement in County Durham, and there is a constant demand for more places than the hall will accommodate.

From October 1934 to December 1935 seventeen courses in all have been held, thirteen craft courses and four Horticultural courses with an average attendance of thirty-nine—the length of the course for any student has varied in the case of crafts, according to the ability of the student, from three to seven weeks, and in horticulture from thirteen to twenty-six weeks.

The programme is arranged to provide regular instruction in simple crafts that can be conveniently and successfully carried on in clubs—woodwork, upholstery, simple weaving, book-binding and toy-making. Talks and discussions on the management and development of clubs, play-readings, lectures on the practice of craftsman-

ship and gardening, wireless discussion groups and miscellaneous talks and discussions fill the evenings of every course. The whole aim is to suggest to residents the possibilities of widening the scope of the activities in their own clubs and give some experience in the organization of new interests.

The experimental nature and novelty of the club movement and the impact of new ideas upon men of varying age and intelligence makes instruction an ever-changing problem. A group in any particular shop may include men from twenty to fifty years of age, many of whom perhaps have no idea as to why they have come. In some cases prolonged unemployment has dulled normal perceptions and sapped the instinct of curiosity—in others, particularly the young men of nineteen to twenty-one, intermittent employment since leaving school and the lack of continuous training have created a condition of mind and outlook unfavourable to the reception and cultivation of new interests. The problem of instruction in the shops is also the problem of the gardens, though here men generally come with some knowledge and experience of allotments or house-gardens and with a definite purpose—this, together with the longer period of residence, makes the task easier and the growth of an increased alertness and sureness can be observed. The physical condition of long-term residents improves markedly but it would be rash to generalize about malnutrition from that fact. Regular meals, outdoor work and the satisfaction that comes with regular occupation, all contribute to bring about the improvement.

In the early part of 1935, through the generosity of the people of Hertfordshire, a poultry farm and pig farm were added to the activities, and students on long courses can gain experience in three branches of 'small-holding' organization.

From the outset Hardwick has been run as a private house and with very few exceptions residents have respected the unwritten laws and standards and traditions established by earlier students. Every course forty men are thrown together for a time without ever having met before and have to live together in the closest contact. They boast of their own Clubs or compare them unfavourably with others—new angles of thought, new considerations, new manners react upon them—after the early awkwardness they become a community, but a community in which no individual is 'lost.' So from the long boredom of idleness with its resultant and relentless crushing down of initiative and individuality a man regains a sense of his own unique personality and life becomes more vital and varied.

The rapid development of the club movement in the area covered by the activities of the Community Service Council during 1935 has resulted in the great majority of residents being drawn from these clubs, and by the increasing co-operation and interchange of ideas drawn from the experience of the clubs on one hand and the peculiar opportunities of Hardwick on the other, the movement will grow and strengthen itself. Its significance grows as the problem of unemployment is prolonged and intensified in the county—viewed from the standpoint solely of the economic solution of unemployment it may appear unimportant but in the sum of human happiness, the relief of the dreadful boredom of idleness, the release of creative energy and imagination, the spread of simple culture and the increase of common action for common welfare it will have far-reaching effects.

Nor has it been forgotten that the wife of the unemployed man may suffer equal hardships, though they be of a different order. Far from being faced with the prospect of idleness she is, if anything, overworked. On her shoulders

falls the responsibility of making one shilling do the work of two, of buying sufficient nourishment for her family out of her slender resources. She must plan the expenditure of every penny, literally *every penny*, and endeavour to keep the home clean and comfortable after years of existence on the low standard of living possible for the unemployed. Moreover, her husband is about the house during the day, fretting at enforced inaction, at times bitter and despairing and after years of worklessness, to a greater or lesser extent, nervously maladjusted. It is small wonder that friction develops within the family living under such conditions. Yet in the main, men and women preserve a remarkable cheerfulness and tolerance, displaying qualities of character and endurance under circumstances that would drive members of a lesser breed to complete degradation of mind and body. In the darkest hour they can jest about their very poverty, make light of their position and invent a whole series of jokes whose protagonists are Ministry of Labour officials, 'Means Test men,' the 'dole' and the unemployed themselves. 'A man stopped me in the street and asked if I was unemployed and wanted a job. There are two million out of work, why did he want to pick on me?' from men who would go to any lengths for the chance of regular employment.

To help the women the majority of Community Service Clubs have organized a section for the members' wives in which opportunities are given for recreation and social intercourse as well as instruction in cookery, sewing, renovating and handicrafts. Quilting is an ancient art in the county and some of the work produced in the women's centres is of a high order. There are difficulties peculiar to the neighbourhood in this development, for women in Durham are less emancipated than in those areas where they have left the home to work in industry.

The Durham miner expects his wife to stay at home, even in his absence, and I have been told that to allow women to congregate together in their own organizations is an offence against natural law! The purpose of the Community Club is, however, to provide opportunities for all sexes and ages, employed or unemployed, and there are already indications that men and women are prepared to work together on an equal basis for their mutual benefit.

The clubs have been formed to deal with a 'meanwhile problem.' Although in County Durham there will be for a generation thousands of men who will not be absorbed into the industrial system, the experience gained may be, nevertheless, of wider value, for the tendency during the next decade will surely be for shorter hours of labour and more leisure for the worker, so that the experience gained in the clubs will be of value under such conditions.

Finally, let me repeat that the function of these clubs is not to provide a 'solution' for the unemployment problem or an alternative existence to normal employment. They have grown up because the mind rusts as well as the body for lack of occupation, and because they can alleviate some of what the King has termed 'the intolerable nightmare of unemployment.' The members believe that there is a possibility of fruitfulness in this sterile idleness, some measure of victory in this defeat.

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## X

'The unemployed don't want work,' actually said in the author's hearing by one whose anonymity he will charitably preserve.

### I

TOW LAW, a grey stone village on the edge of the moors, seems at first sight a pleasant enough place in which to live. Facing the Stanhope moors, and nearly 1,000 feet above sea level, it enjoys what the railway posters term a bracing climate. During the winter the winds are keen, and the roads often impassable with snow, but on a fine day the inhabitants can revel in the view of many miles of pleasant country. As a sole occupation this is apt to become monotonous, and for the last ten years for each man working in this village another has stood idle. The winds are keener when clothes are scarce, snow has less attraction when boots are old, and long walks over the moors on an empty stomach lose much of their original charm.

Once Tow Law was prosperous, the great iron foundry which dominated the village gave work for all; the pits now derelict provided men with a difficult and dangerous trade. Now the coking ovens, pithead gear, trucks and buildings stand rotting with decay. Coal and steel created this community; the life of the village naturally grouped itself round their production and with their departure went not only the employment of the villagers, but the hope of any further industrial activity. There is no reason why any new work should go to Tow Law, it is too far from communication and markets; had it not been for coal and steel it would have remained an agricultural hamlet.

The spirit of the men at Tow Law was not broken by



'DERELICT'

*To face page 92*



this calamity and at the suggestion of several leaders in the public life they gathered together to use their enforced inaction for some profit. The foundry had gone, but had left an unsightly memorial, three acres and more of broken land studded with derelict but solid foundations, stone and brick, heaps of refuse. Such a waste place might be transformed into a football field, children's playground and open-air swimming bath, all needed in the village but which would never be created either by the paid labour of private enterprise or the local authority.

A lease for this waste land was arranged and the interest of the Commissioner for Special Areas obtained for the scheme; out of his funds were provided boots and overalls and a meal each day for the men engaged on the work; his technical staff gave valuable assistance not only with the preliminary 'setting out' of the job but with continued advice when it was under way.

Two hundred men volunteered to give their labour and as there was only room for eighty at a time it was decided to work in alternate weekly shifts, eighty one week, eighty the next. A Committee was formed among the workers which selected 'gangers' or foremen to superintend the work; authority was given them to direct operations. Superficially there was no difference between the organization of this voluntary labour scheme and any public work undertaken by a statutory body. The spirit was fundamentally different, the men were working under their own elected leaders at a task which they held to be of value, of value to themselves, their village and their children. On one occasion I observed a man accidentally let fall a quantity of rubble on another's foot. I expected a loud rebuke to say the least of it, but the injured man took no notice and when I expressed surprise at his moderation said, 'it's different on this job, we are all working for each other here.'

The adventure was now greatly heartened by help from an unexpected quarter. The London Rover Scouts heard of the scheme, appealed to their members and a regular £15 a month was collected and sent to Tow Law. The unemployed men of Durham and the young men employed in London, separated by some 300 miles and not known to each other before, creating something whose worth cannot be expressed in terms of utility alone. In Tow Law they have time to spare and little money; the London Rovers are engaged in whole time jobs though often poorly paid, each has given what he had, labour from the North, money from the South—together they are building something 'more enduring than brass.'

Whatever the future may hold for Tow Law, and the prospects are far from fair, there has been some measure of victory in what was at first defeat. Men have felt once more that they are partners in the common weal, their hands have regained their strength, preserved their skill, an apparently impossible task is being accomplished with a fervour which though inarticulate in fact is moving a mountain. In the words of one of the workers 'we are making something that will show others that come after us what the unemployed could do.'

It is now nine months since the work began, and already some 30,000 tons of stone and cement have been shifted and far from any slowing in enthusiasm the number of men who wish to take part in the venture increases weekly. Not for another two years will it be completed and ready for use, and this has not daunted the spirit of the workers. There is in fact competition among them for the job of tackling the most difficult pieces of work. Men of all ages are engaged; some have past their industrial prime and are unfit for arduous work, they have been delegated with the boys to the lighter tasks, but all feel that they are playing an equal part. Their efficiency is undoubtedly hampered by the fact of

their physical condition of months of inaction and inadequate diet, and it is interesting to speculate what might be accomplished by such men if they were assured of a more adequate supply of the necessities of life. Similar work on a much larger scale has been developed under Soviet, Fascist and the Nazi regime, but in the main there has been an element of compulsion in them which is foreign to their English equivalent.

The ultimate value of this work is not so much the creation of something of beauty and use out of ugliness and waste, but the free association of free men maintaining their self respect and contributing to the well-being of a society which has been unable to give them a place within its economic structure.

## II

At the head of the Rhymney Valley in South Wales is Rhymney Town where eighty out of every hundred men are unemployed. The pit which was the only industry has been closed for several years and virtually every able-bodied man is not only out of work, but knows that unless he gets out of the valley there is not much chance of getting a job again.

Like the men of Tow Law those of Rhymney met together for their mutual aid. They found an outcrop of coal on the mountain side and after obtaining permission, began to mine. 500 men worked in shifts to produce two cwt. of coal for each family in the village—they drove a shaft 200 yards into the mountain, timbered it, laid lines for the trams and from start to finish it was organized by the men themselves. There was no boss and no wages, there was no modern equipment and they worked by candles, and carried the coal on their backs down the mountain side; there was weeks of work before ever a lump of coal was produced. The mine was run in the spirit of fellowship, everybody did his whack and liked

doing it. There was discipline, but it was not imposed from without but was from within. Coal mining is, at the best, a difficult job. I went down this Rhymney pit and came out wondering how there could be argument about the wages a miner should receive; under such conditions I felt they should be paid as much as they demanded. Admittedly it is not the discomfort or the danger which establishes the wage rate, and no doubt there are economic reasons why the wages in this occupation should be lower than in any other, but just as I feel that the Cabinet should sit in Palmers Yard when they are discussing their policy with regard to the Special Areas I feel that if discussions on miners' wages took place at the coal face a different spirit might prevail!

The Rhymney mine was self-supporting, the members paid 3d. a week for a couple of months before they found coal or got anything out of it. It is interesting to consider that if the working conditions of the Rhymney Club were forced upon the members, if men were compelled to work twelve to fourteen hours a week for two cwt. of coal it would be considered a most appalling exploitation and the men in that pit would have been slaves; but because it was a self-imposed task, there was something altogether different about it, and those men of Rhymney obtained satisfaction from this labour out of all proportion to their material gain. It could be argued that the interest of such a scheme is in itself a condemnation of the economic area, and I will agree, but even if its cause came from an evil thing it does not detract from its grandeur. The five hundred have kept their hands and brains in good condition, they have discovered how to work together not alone for profit, and I suggest that from such a spirit and such men something might grow that will change the face of industry and put into it, perhaps with violence, some semblance of a soul.

## XI

'But a certain Samaritan. . . '

Luke x, 10-33.

MR. SMITH of Streatham sat in the dining-room of his suburban house feeling that life was good. His day at the Whitehall office had not overtaxed his energies although the tube journey from his home to the Ministry took the better part of forty minutes and sometimes gave him headaches, especially in the hot weather. Except for the War he had always been a Civil Servant, conscientious at his job but finding in it little that was interesting. Mr. Smith's real life began at six when he stepped out from the station on the half-mile walk to his house. Music enthralled him, not the clattering jazz of the local palais de dance or the lugubrious threnodies of the cinema organ, but music made by himself—or more exactly made by himself on the models of the masters. In the corner of his drawing-room rested a Bechstein, his own Bechstein—his when another two years' instalments had been paid. Mrs. Smith, as she watered the herbaceous border of an evening, waved the can vigorously to the scherzo of the Waldstein sonata or more reflectively to the maestoso of a Brahms concerto. Seated before his instrument all questions of egg-grading and land valuation dissolved themselves into quaver and semi-quaver and Mr. Smith, who dabbled in mathematics, delighted in Bach.

On this evening he looked at the wireless programme and decided that the talk would be over and that a concert, in which Adrian Boult was to conduct the Emperor Concerto, pleased his fancy. He switched on the set, twiddled the controls and cursed softly, the talk was not finished after all. 'Better hear it out,' he thought,



'then I'll be sure to hear the music from the beginning.' Very clearly from the walnut cabinet a voice spoke to Mr. Smith, a voice whose accent he found a little difficult to understand but whose words demanded his attention. 'One employer said to me, "From a business point of view you're less valuable to me than a drum of oil. We must have oil, but we can do without you." This is the type of men responsible for the system—people working ten and twelve hours a day, sweated half to death on these point-to-point and other speeding-up-production methods. All the time the development of machinery is simplifying skill and doing away with us older fellows. It affects men over twenty—yes, it's come down to twenty now. Many employers to-day favour women and juveniles, who, when they become entitled to a higher scale of wages, find themselves on the scrap-heap with the others. I'm thirty-three, but I've been told time after time that I'm too old, and some of my friends who are over forty know for a fact that they'll never get another job whilst we live under this present system. There's plenty of gold, plenty of material, and God knows there's plenty of labour, so what's wrong? I'm not a revolutionary in the sense of violence, but we do want a revolutionary change in our conditions, and unless this change comes quick, thousands like myself are condemned to live in despair and slow starvation, watching our wives and children rot before our eyes. Neither Fascism or Communism nor any other "ism" holds any terror for us. Nothing can be worse than what we've got at present.'

Mr. Smith had never thought much about unemployment, it was outside his experience, the possibility of being out of work himself had never occurred to him. He remembered men standing outside a Labour Exchange somewhere, a long queue rather shabbily dressed and strangely quiet. He had felt that it must be rather

degrading to stand like that, openly applying for State relief. A married cousin of his had once been unemployed for two or three months and he had sent him a parcel for which he had never received an acknowledgment. There were two million like that chap who had been talking on the wireless, two million, it was a large number; he felt thankful for the security of his own job, a regular salary, yearly increments and eventually a pension. That was all right, but what about the two million? 'Something,' said Mr. Smith to the Medici print of the Young Warrior over the mantelpiece, 'ought to be done about it.'

'Heard an interesting talk on the radio last night,' he mentioned to Mr. Brown, of Balham, who was lunching with him, 'unemployed chap saying what he felt about things, pretty tough.'

'Something ought to be done about it,' replied his friend, 'spending millions on armaments and letting fellows rot away on the dole. I read a bit of a Blue Book the other day, report of something on conditions in South Wales and Durham, shocking.'

'You know, we're damned lucky in the Ministry,' went on Mr. Smith, 'we don't make a packet, but we're safe. I suppose we ought to do something for these fellows, but we can't give them work—that's a Government's job. I wish something could be done to make life a bit more tolerable for them.' He opened his newspaper. 'Here's something about the very thing we're talking about, visit of the Prince of Wales to Service Clubs in Durham, picture of him laying a foundation stone, they look a rough lot! It seems that there are places where chaps can mend their boots and furniture, do a bit of woodwork and get together generally. Something about the National Council of Social Service. I should think they're in London—I'll look them up in the phone book when we get back.'

In due course Mr. Smith made contact with the Council, became possessed of literature about the work and managed to get the Secretary of his Staff Association to agree to a talk on Unemployment at their next meeting. The speaker came from Durham and talked of conditions in a derelict village, of bitterness turning to apathy, of the decay of the spirit which is worse than the loss of physical power. Encouraged by the lack of coughing and shuffling he suggested that they should do something about it, take an interest in one or two villages, come up and see them and see things for themselves. Money was needed, but more than money. The unemployed man was isolated, he felt that the South was prosperous and didn't care. It was a national business requiring national action. In the North they had little money to spare but a deal of time; in the South they had little time but possibly a bit of money. Money from the South, labour in the North—a co-operative venture creating value.

Unanimously the meeting decided to do something; it was agreed to contribute a penny, twopence or threepence a week, to have it deducted from monthly salaries. Clothing, books, records, football gear were to be collected. Some of the typists agreed to meet and renovate the garments which were to be sent up.

A month later, after travelling all night, Mr. Smith stepped out of the train at Durham into a drizzly dawn. A few hours later he was at Bloxham; two hundred cottages, a slag heap and a wooden hut packed to suffocation with men in cloth caps, women in shining mackintoshes and yelling children. It was a far cry from Whitehall, even further from the Bechstein in the drawing-room.

When the Chairman whispered in his ear, 'Ye can spake as long as ye can,' Mr. Smith began to be doubtful whether it had been wise to come; the atmosphere was thick with the smell of damp clothing, the expectant

silence of the audience seemed vaguely sinister, he was no public speaker and he wondered how they would take it. He was on his feet and speaking, he heard his own voice far away and unfamiliar, 'When I got to Durham City I thought "fancy living in a spot like this," when I got to Bloxham I thought, "fancy letting people live in a place like this," but when I saw you chaps I thought "it wouldn't be such a bad place to spend a summer holiday".'

The welcome of it offended his sense of concord, warmed his heart.

That night after a day spent in the village and an inspection of the work which was being done to change a couple of acres of waste land into a playground for the children, he attended a 'social' in the hut. The air was thicker than it had been in the afternoon, tea was handed round in cups presented by his colleagues, a piano—from the same source—was being thumped by a large lady who played with strength rather than judgment. Mr. Smith, of Streatham, was surrounded by 'the unemployed.'

'Can you play the piano?'

'Well, a little.'

'Ay, then let's hear ye.'

He approached the instrument diffidently, it was all so different, 'What should he play?'

'Give us a waltz.'

'Something hot!'

He shuddered.

'Whatever ye like.'

He gave them the Berceuse of Chaminade.

'My, he don't half play well.'

'Something a bit more lively.'

He tried the scherzo from Beethoven's piano sonata, Op. 31.

'That's better, now give us a dance!'

Mr. Smith embarked on the 'Blue Danube,' which he had not played since the War.

Those who were not dancing clustered round the piano admiring the swiftness of his fingers, the delicacy of his touch.

A mouth-organ quartet appeared beside him and together they rendered 'Blaze-away!'—the heat in the room and the violence of the performance made him sweat but there was no release. He played for an hour and a half, drank three cups of tea, smoked ten cigarettes, refused a slice of Twist, made a moving little speech and was then taken rapidly back to Durham, the night train and King's Cross for breakfast.

'You have to meet them yourself,' he told Mr. Brown over the morning letters. 'My God, we've got to carry this on, they're worth it.'

## XII

‘—that these men—  
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
Being nature’s livery or fortune’s star—  
Their virtues else—be they as pure as grace,  
As infinite as man may undergo—  
Shall in the general censure take corruption  
From that particular fault:’

*Shakespeare.*

THE fact of unemployment, at first sight, may appear too obvious to require elaboration but for the purpose of this argument the definition of Sir William Beveridge that it is ‘a spell of unemployment between two spells of employment’ provides material for reflection, as it is on this basis that the machinery of Labour Exchanges and Unemployment Benefit has been erected, and in this position that the average citizen considers the ‘unemployed man’ to be. This definition assumes that unemployment is a normal part of our industrial organization, that, although there is always work to be done somewhere, the labour to do it is in the wrong place: that the conditions of employment in certain trades, for example, seasonal workers and dockers, preclude whole time employment throughout the year, and involve some period of unemployment as a ‘normal’ condition of employment.

Statistics show that this conception is substantially correct and that 75% of the registered unemployed have been out of work for less than a year, and that of these 80% have been unemployed for less than six months. Rates of allowances have been arranged on the assumption that the period of unemployment will be short and that the insured will be reabsorbed after a brief period into employment. It is obvious that if the basic concep-

tion of the 'unemployed' man's needs is considered with this definition in view very different conclusions will be arrived at than from those which would result from an examination of the 'unemployed' in a Distressed Area. In Durham, South Wales and other districts it is doubtful whether the definition of Sir William Beveridge will hold water; it is no question of a spell of unemployment between spells of employment but of men who will *never* have another job, permanently workless, presenting not so much a problem of 'unemployment' as the social problem of thousands of permanently displaced men and women.

The rates of benefit of such persons should be examined in a totally different light; they are virtually pensions and should be assessed as such. Whether industry or the State should bear the responsibility of such pensionaries is a matter for discussion, but it would go far to clarify the issues if instead of being termed 'unemployed' they were recognized as 'retired' and assessed accordingly. Not only would such a step enable the true figures of actual 'unemployment' to be discovered, and I assume Sir William Beveridge's definition, but it would remove from thousands of men in the country the stigma which for better or worse is attached to that condition. Given an adequate pension, opportunities for profitable use of their leisure, and an equal status in the community, there are many middle-aged men in Durham County whose position would be no worse economically or socially than if they once more went down the pits.

The hard-core of unemployment is very largely centred in the Special Areas and in other parts conditions approximate to the pre-war level. It is difficult, however, to make any exact comparison between the position to-day and in 1914, and the fact that during the last General Election Viscount Snowden was reputed to have referred

slightly to the efforts which had been made to reduce unemployment in London and the Home Counties because the pre-war figure was 4% and to-day is 8%, indicates that if statesmen are so ignorant of the actual situation there is need for the public to be made more fully aware of the true position.

It is not generally realized that there must always be some persons unemployed, that we can never reach the stage that everyone will be in work at the same time, and that industry must have a pool of labour. An excess of the supply of labour over the demand is a normal condition even in the skilled and organized trades, but no steps have been taken to measure this 'pool of labour' although to-day it is quite different from the pre-war figure. This is obvious if we remember that pre-war figures of unemployed were mainly confined to skilled operatives and that practically no account was taken of the large pool of labour represented by casuals and dockers, etc., which are included in present-day figures.

There has always been a large surplus of labour in the unskilled and unorganized occupations, and now that they are included in the Live Register figures to a greater extent than pre-war, they tend to suggest that industrial conditions to-day are much worse than pre-war, whereas the evidence is far from conclusive that this is so.

There are several factors which contribute to swell the Live Register as compared with pre-war conditions, e.g.:

(1) Existence of Unemployment Insurance and Unemployment Assistance Board has increased the number who register as unemployed.

(2) Workers without Unemployment Insurance and Unemployment Assistance are registered as unemployed, usually to satisfy P.A.C. requirements.

(3) Dockers. Although a docker normally does not expect a full week's work, he may secure normal employ-



ment each week and be entitled to Unemployment Insurance, provided he satisfies the statutory conditions. Pre-war this would not be considered unemployment.

(4) Altered conditions in industry. The motor trade has developed largely along lines of specialization and men now register in these new occupations with the result that, although they are largely unskilled, there is a tendency for each occupation to require its own pool of labour. In other words, an increase in the number of occupations tends to increase the pool of labour of unemployed.

(5) Juveniles. There were no pre-war figures of school leavers, now included in the Live Register of unemployed.

These facts, however, should not be allowed to obscure the need for a more lively policy both in regard to the provision of work for the Special Areas and to the amelioration of the unemployed man's economic and social status. To return to Durham, there are certain measures which if adopted would relieve the immediate distress and give the county cause to hope that its difficulties were a national responsibility. Among these may be numbered the re-organization of the coal industry, the introduction of ancillary or other industries associated with coal and its by-products, the transference of young people *and their parents* with the family as the minimum unit and, if possible, the group of families as the norm, the provision of suitable houses for the transferees and the removal from the Unemployment Register of the middle-aged men who will not find work again and who cannot be transferred, and their provision with an adequate pension and opportunities of part-time occupation either on the land or in rural industries.

A national policy which would include pensions for industrial workers at fifty-five or sixty and compulsory attendance at school of all children under sixteen would

relieve the situation in the Special Areas as well as in those districts in which the incidence of unemployment is less severe.

If it is agreed that Unemployment is a normal concomitant of our present industrial organization, that because of its complexity there will always be labour 'in the wrong place,' even if there is a lack of it somewhere else, some measures are urgently required to remove from what is in effect an economic dislocation, any suspicion of moral or functional disability. It is difficult to appreciate why one section of the population should bear the shocks of a system from which others are benefiting.

The power to dispossess men and women from employment is, perhaps, the greatest responsibility of all, and it is doubtful whether a country can be described as free in which the power to put people in or out of employment—with all its physical, mental and spiritual results—is allotted indiscriminately to persons not noticeably alive to the moral responsibilities involved. To be turned out of a job often produces more pain than some of the ordinary penalties of the law and while special care is taken in the selection of those who distribute legal punishment no such particularity is shown when men are appointed to administer industrial penalties of an equal stringency.

Surely the answer must be that unemployment is not a punishment and does not represent a moral failure on the part of the victim, but if this is so his condition and position in the community must be one of equality of status with the employed man. At the moment this is demonstrably not the case.

To remove the causes of unemployment and to secure a decent standard of living for those displaced is, I maintain, the province and responsibility of the State. It is a matter for economists, industrialists and technicians. To remove the stigma of unemployment and to

alleviate its psychological effects is a more personal matter and the responsibility of the ordinary citizen. It is a matter of morals and the State is only to a limited extent a moral agent. Its actions are determined very largely by amoral forces, its ethic is the lowest common denominator agreed by the majority and to be moral in the eyes of the State postulates no very great ethical development in the individual. History has shown that men in the mass in their collective dealings tend to be less moral than the individuals composing that mass would be in their individual reaction to a similar problem. This is probably true of the collective attitude of the State towards the unemployed; actions which individuals would not tolerate in their personal relations are practised by the less moral State without arousing widespread indignation.

While the 'solution' of unemployment may rest with the State, the expression of Will which will compel such action must remain the duty and the moral responsibility of the individual citizen. I have attempted to show that unemployment affects the whole man and it is the duty of the citizen to be concerned with every facet of the problem, physical, mental and spiritual. It is not enough to demand high rates of allowance, the abolition of the Means Test or similar political measures; one of the most cruel effects of unemployment is the sense of frustration, of separation from the normal life of the community, personal problems which can only be solved by personal relationship. Moreover, this relationship must not be one which reflects moral advantage to the donor and moral inferiority to the beneficiary; it is only by the association of free men with free men for their mutual gain or their country's gain or for the greater glory of God that good will come. An unemployed ship's steward said to me recently, 'We're all passengers on the same ship, some have been given first, some second and some third-class

tickets. The ship is drifting on to a lee-shore and it won't help the crew to save the vessel if the different classes of passengers all begin to fight among themselves. We're all in the same boat and if it founders, first, second and steerage all go to the bottom. Of course what we ought to have is a one-class boat but it won't really be one-class if it's been brought about by bumping off everybody except the steerage. It won't be classless, it'll be steerage class all through.'

The 'first class' have the power to show that they are aware of conditions in the 'steerage' and that they will not tolerate them, and if they do not work to this end and the 'steerage,' finding their estate insupportable, wreck the ship in the name of justice, the responsibility is on the heads of those who shut their eyes and stopped their ears to the cry that would not be denied.

Something of the pitman's lot has now briefly been told; they have endured a dangerous trade, suffered poverty, unemployment, physical need and spiritual dismay; even hope is fading, to be succeeded by apathy and despair. Mr. Standfast was not afraid of the waters for he believed that on the farther bank awaited him some consolation for the trials of his journey; the pitmen have received little intimation of such felicity and, burdened with an intolerable weight, they struggle still in Despond. The pilgrimage is not theirs alone but everyman's. We are all members one of another and no one, remembering the Levite, can say that this is none of his business.

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# APPENDIX I

## UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS FOR COUNTY DURHAM. JUNE 1936

Area Office	Related Local Office(s) of Ministry of Labour	Total Population	Insured Population	Number of Able-Bodied Unemployed			Total	% of unemployed to Population insured
				U.I.B. a.	U.A.B. b.	P.A.C. c.		
Durham	Durham	60,000	14,900	643	2,203	350	3,196	21.00
Bishop Auckland	Bishop Auckland Cockfield	39,000 8,000	10,088 2,000	535 143	3,290 586	620 7	4,445 736	44.00 37.00
Chester-le-Street	Chester-le-Street Birtley	35,000 18,000	11,275 6,000	707 267	1,502 754	307 117	2,516 1,138	22.00 19.00
Consett	Consett Stanley Lanchester	45,000 55,000 10,000	12,500 15,577 3,300	372 1,409 336	600 2,500 605	47 546 90	1,019 4,455 1,031	8.00 29.00 31.00
Crook	Crook Stanhope Wolsingham	28,500 10,000 3,000	9,600 1,780 555	475 382 25	2,431 116 48	98 2 —	3,004 500 73	31.00 28.00 13.00
Horden	Horden Seaham Harbour Haswell Wheatley Hill	31,000 49,000 14,000 12,000	10,444 15,465 3,562 3,000	244 976 94 295	514 1,482 255 528	30 44 18 10	788 2,502 367 833	8.00 16.00 10.00 28.00
Houghton-le-Spring	Houghton-le-Spring Washington	55,000 19,000	16,282 6,700	845 403	1,872 780	126 30	2,843 1,213	17.00 18.00
Spennymoor	Spennymoor Shildon	35,000 12,500	10,635 3,970	520 167	2,153 1,312	153 92	2,826 1,571	27.00 39.00
Sunderland Sub-District	Sunderland Pallion Southwick	200,000	39,295 14,915 6,718	2,434 899 1,967	7,021 3,512 2,022	2,162	20,017	33.00
TOTALS		739,000	218,561	14,138	36,086	4,849	55,073	25.00

## APPENDIX II

### THE SPENNYMOOR SETTLEMENT ADULT SCHOOL

#### REPORT ON BUDGETS OF UNEMPLOYED

**D**URING a series of discussions which the Spennymoor Settlement Adult School had on the causes, effects and cure of unemployment, it was felt by the members of the School that they could, with advantage, attempt a little research work in the question of the budgets of the unemployed. Several of the members of the School are unemployed but it was not easy for them to discuss their experiences. Only in the atmosphere of fellowship generated by the School was it possible for the unemployed members to make their invaluable contribution to the discussion and it is to them that the School is indebted for the bulk of this report.

This is the first occasion on which the School has attempted anything in the nature of a report and, although painfully aware of its shortcomings, the Spennymoor School feels that it is a beginning which might encourage other Adult Schools to take up the question and make a more thorough analysis in their own particular areas.

As the budget to be discussed was that of a family, the first point to be decided was that of the composition of the family unit. This was eventually agreed upon as a man, wife and three children of five, nine and twelve years. The income of this family was based upon the allowances of the Unemployment Assistance Board and this was taken to be 37s. 6d. The School then discussed the distribution of this income in a normal week; the cause of any changes in its distribution; and the effects of such changes.

It was obvious that the income would be distributed

over certain definite items. But in what proportion? It was agreed that a fairly accurate distribution of expenditure was as follows:

*Rent.* Rent took about 25% of the income. But this applied only to the particular family that was under consideration. The incidence of rent falls heaviest on those least able to bear it. A man and wife drawing an allowance of 26s. could receive no assurance that their rent would be limited to 25% of their income. It was agreed that the allowances of the U.A.B. showed greater elasticity than the scale of rents which varied between 7s. 6d. and 11s.

*Clothes.* There appeared to be some confusion on this point. It is generally assumed by those who are not in contact with the real situation that the amount spent on clothing 'clubs' is the total amount spent by the unemployed on clothes. To pay 1s. or even 2s. per week into a clothing 'club' is not, by any means, sufficient to keep a family clothed. There are great differences in the aptitude of women in that some are much quicker than others with their fingers. Certain implications follow this fact. If both types of women insist upon maintaining the same standard of clothing for their children, either (a) the children of the mother who is not so clever will not retain the normal food standard of the unemployed because there is generally a shift of expenditure from food to clothes or, (b) identical standards are ignored and the children of different mothers show it in their clothes. But here it was suggested that the poorly dressed families are not necessarily those that are suffering most, although they attract most compassion and receive the most help in the form of gifts of clothes.

*Fuel.* As two cwt. of good coal is as cheap as and better than three cwt. of bad coal, no saving is effected by buying cheap coal. Where gas rings or cookers were installed, little use was made of them. Coke might be used to help out the coal but the chief form of economy in the use of coal is to concentrate the tasks of baking, etc., on those

times that there is a large fire burning. The most important time is Sunday, when fresh meat is cooked. This involves having a large fire. This arrangement of economizing fuel means that the woman has to start on a new heavy task of baking after she has finished an already heavy task. Sunday is not, therefore, a day of rest. It is not lack of ingenuity, but limits of endurance that prevents any further saving. In times of sickness, the kitchen is turned into a bedroom in order that the patient might have the benefit of a fire which is necessary when bed clothing is thin and meagre.

*Food.* As in the case of clothes, there are differences between women as managers, but in this case, the difference is not so great. Marketing has been reduced to an exact science, and a difference of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in price is sufficient to lead to a change of retailers. Few women think of themselves as permanent customers of any retailer, preferring to remain free buyers and taking advantage of the 'higgling of the market' which is very sensitive. On the other hand, sometimes a particular retailer is selected who supplies goods on credit, but in most of these cases, the goods are consumed before they are paid for. This has a tendency to limit the range of marketing. To change from being a credit purchaser to a cash purchaser is almost a physical impossibility.

*Milk.* Contrary to normal procedure, milk is not thought of in the same sense as food. It is bought only for specific purposes, the chief of which is for feeding children. The diet of an adult does not include cows' milk; it is confined to condensed milk.

*Doctor.* The general mode of procedure is to pay the 'family' doctor and this subscription includes the whole family except, of course, those who are insured under the National Health Acts.

*Insurances.* Charges such as Life Assurances, usually contracted in times of relative prosperity, have still to be met in times of adversity. They have to be kept good otherwise the client sustains a heavy financial loss.



*Newspapers.* Many of the unemployed do not read newspapers because they cannot buy them. Some buy one, but none buy two. This is an impoverishment which is very serious, leading as it does to a subtle but devastating malnutrition.

*Sundry Fixed Charges.* These are charges which, although reduced to a minimum cannot be completely wiped out. They include Trade Union contributions, contributions to Nursing Associations, pennies for children and items like Church collections.

*The Balance Sheet.*

Rent ... ..	9	6
Clothes ... ..	3	6
Fuel ... ..	2	3
Light ... ..	1	6
Food ... ..	15	0
Milk ... ..	1	0
Doctor ... ..		6
Insurances ... ..	1	6
Newspapers ... ..		6
Fixed Charges ... ..	1	6
Surplus... ..		9
	<hr/>	
	£1 17 6	
	<hr/>	

Up to this point, the School had been discussing a budget for a week in which no emergency had arisen which would cause any shift in expenditure. Even so, the balancing of the budget is a very delicate procedure and even a slight shift in expenditure causes a great deal of anxiety to the wives of unemployed men. Since it was obvious that changes did take place, the School had then to discuss the causes and effects of such changes.

*Illness.* Illnesses of a minor nature are the chief causes of changes in expenditure because money has to be found to provide, at least, a more nourishing diet for the patient. It is acknowledged that the U.A.B. allowances can be increased in the case of illness, but such illness has

to be certifiable. A cold which lasts a couple of days; a burn or scald which any child might receive; toothache etc., are hardly a reason for a doctor's certificate. And yet a cold requires some corrective, a burn requires oil and a dressing, a toothache requires the services of a dentist. All of these things require money. There is a good deal of sickness that is not certifiable but still requires the spending of money in the attempt to check any complicated or dangerous illness, and yet an extra allowance is made only when the serious effects of illness can be seen and certified. There is a good deal of serious illness to-day which might have been checked in the early stages had there then been a small sum of money available.

*Deficiencies in Diet.* The School are of the opinion that deficiencies in diet are chiefly responsible for illness. The amount of money available for food meant that the diet, of a necessity, would contain too many starchy foods because they were cheaper. Articles such as fruit, which are really indispensable for a balanced diet, are beyond the range of a U.A.B. allowance.

*Poultry Schemes.* Some of the initial financial difficulties of members of Poultry Schemes may also be pointed out at this stage. All members of a Poultry Scheme have to find at least one shilling per week during the first six months of the Scheme. This means a great sacrifice and the continuance of these Schemes are a great tribute to the energy, ingenuity and determination of those unemployed who are working on them. If it is remembered that the horizon of the unemployed is in most cases limited to seven days, it is possible then to appreciate the sacrifice involved of paying their shilling per week for six months before there is any indication of any return for their work and sacrifice. The entry of any man into one of these Schemes is usually preceded by a long and earnest family council. Many men have to drop the scheme because they cannot undergo the sacrifice involved.

Where is the money obtained with which to pay for these 'extras' that the normal budget does not allow for?

Obviously it must come from the existing U.A.B. allowances and this means a shift in expenditure from the items named in the budget to the 'extras'. In a word, it means economy has to be practised on some items in the budget. What are these items?

No saving can be effected in the case of rent which is accepted as the most rigid item of expenditure. Only in extreme cases, such as a serious illness, is the question of non-payment of rent ever discussed. Where rent is missed for one or several weeks, there remains the extra expenditure of rent arrears which may continue for several months. The anxiety of such a position makes it one that is not lightly accepted.

The expenditure on clothes shows more elasticity. To save on clothes means much more work for the woman, in attempting almost impossible tasks with a needle and old clothes. Special care can be taken of best clothes, this involving the wearing of old clothes much longer and the changing into better clothes less often. This elasticity in expenditure on old clothes is possible only because the life of clothes is limited and one can remain hidden away for a time during which an article might have been worn out. This economy involves a restriction on an already limited social life. One does not attend either Church or Chapel in patched clothes.

The curve of food consumption is one that shoots quickly up to its maximum on pay day and thereafter declines more or less sharply until the day before pay day when it is at its minimum. This means that there are certain days when food is scarce. Some saving on food expenditure is effected by having more scarce days. The general diet is monotonous, broken only by articles like currants. When money has to be found for emergencies, these articles are regarded as luxuries and dispensed with. This makes a monotonous diet even more monotonous. In any case, it is a question of saving pennies only but these are very important. Indeed, it is the penny that is the real legal tender of the unemployed.

In such circumstances, the strain on the mind of the woman is terrific. The minor events of ordinary life are magnified beyond all recognition by those who have no understanding of the circumstances of the unemployed. The breaking of crockery, which is almost a matter of routine under normal circumstances, becomes for the unemployed household a real tragedy.

It is often assumed that unemployment means a monotonous routine. The woman would wish that this were true. If it were so every week would be the same. But it is the break in the routine that they fear because such a break involves more work and worry for them. It is this worry and uncertainty that is at the root of all the troubles of the women. The only certainty they have is that there is no end to unemployment. If they could see the end of it they could attempt some form of planned life, but the future remains dark.

The allowances are short by that essential sum which would give the unemployed a measure of economic security and a chance to achieve happiness. As matters stand everything is excluded from their minds but a terrible gnawing, mental insecurity. Only by very good management on the part of the woman is existence possible. There is no thought of the future because they are utterly unable to project themselves out of the present. They know not peace. Neither can they be said to have life. Theirs is a continual struggle against forces they do not understand and are most inadequately equipped to deal with.

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